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THE BARD
OF
MARY REDCLIFFE

BY
ERNEST LACY

ILLUSTRATED AUTOGRAPH EDITION

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ERNEST LACY

To
THE MEMORY OF MY BROTHER,
WILLIAM,
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

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AUTOGRAPH EDITION

Limited to Three Hundred and Fifty Copies

No. 25

Ernest Lacy -

Printed for

*Beware ! beware
His flashing eyes, his floating hair !
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread ;
For he on honey-dew hath fed
And drunk the milk of Paradise.*—KUBLA KHAN.

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PERSONS REPRESENTED.

THOMAS CHATTERTON, *the Bard of Mary Redcliffe.*

RICHARD PHILLIPS, *his uncle, Sexton of Mary Redcliffe.*

THOMAS PHILLIPS, *an usher in the Colston School.*

MRS. CHATTERTON, *the Poet's mother.*

MARY CHATTERTON, *her daughter.*

HENRY BURGUM, *a wealthy pewterer.*

BERTHA BURGUM, *his daughter.*

JAMES THISTLETHWAITE, *a teacher in the Colston School.*

THOMAS BROUGHTON, *the Vicar of Mary Redcliffe.*

JOHN LAMBERT, *an attorney to whom Chatterton is bound.*

MRS. LAMBERT, *his mother.*

SAM, *his footboy.*

ALICE,	}	girls in Bristol.
BETTY,		
DOROTHY,		
AGNES,		

ALEXANDER CATCOTT, *the Vicar of Temple Church.*

GEORGE CATCOTT, *his brother.*

WILLIAM BARRETT, *a surgeon.*

Persons Represented

HORACE WALPOLE, *son of the former Prime Minister of England.*

THOMAS HARRIS, *the Mayor of Bristol.*

CAPTAIN FRANCISCO, *a highwayman.*

MONSIEUR BARTHELEMON, *the leader of the band in the Gardens.*

MRS. ANGELL, *the keeper of a lodging-house.*

HARRY ANGELL, *her son, ten years of age.*

BERTHA ANGELL, *her daughter, six years of age.*

Street-criers ; a gingerbread-man, a flower-girl, mummers and spectators ; first gentleman, second gentleman, first girl, second girl, other patrons of Marylebone Gardens, and gods and goddesses in the burletta.

SCENES : *Bristol and London. TIME : From the middle of April to the latter part of August, 1770.*

DESCRIPTIONS OF THE CHARACTERS.

THOMAS CHATTERTON,

the Bard of Mary Redcliffe, though not yet eighteen years of age, is as mature in body as he is in mind. He is medium-sized, strong and agile ; his mouth is large ; his nose straight ; his forehead high ; his auburn hair long and flowing. His gray eyes, one of which is more brilliant than the other, are remarkable for the fire rolling at the bottom of them—a fire sometimes seen in black eyes, but not in gray ones. His motions, like his words, are sudden and swift, indicating the immediate passing of thought into action.

RICHARD PHILLIPS,

his uncle and Sexton of Mary Redcliffe, is lean, grizzly, and wrinkled. Were he to stand erect, he would be taller than the average man, but grave-digging has stooped his shoulders and robbed him of a foot in height. His slow steps seem timed to the movement of a dirge, his downcast eyes suggest walking over sepulchral brasses, and his hushed voice whispers of long comradeship with the dead.

Descriptions of the Characters

THOMAS PHILLIPS,

an usher in the Colston School, is in his twenty-sixth year. He is homely in the word's twofold sense : his form is meagre and awkward ; his hair is scant ; his features are irregular ; but his large brown eyes have a fireside glow that radiates happiness to others, and he leaves the impression of his being a big man—a rudely-hewn foundation rock, underground, on which the loftiest spire could rest.

MRS. CHATTERTON,

the Poet's mother, is a plain, primitive little woman, with flaxen hair streaked with white, and a countenance of the ordinary type. In person and even in a trick of tone, she resembles Thomas as a painter's first sketch resembles his finished work. Unreasoning love, with its faith and anxiety, beams from her face ; and, while her son is speaking, she gazes at him with eyes as full of wonder as is the proverbial hen when she sees the gosling she has hatched disporting in a pond.

MARY CHATTERTON,

her daughter, is a spirited girl, two years older than the Poet. She is somewhat taller than her mother, and is

Descriptions of the Characters

possessed of a symmetrical figure, brown curling hair, and gleaming black eyes, in which a strange light flits at times, vanishing like Will-o'-the-wisp. She is, the gossips say, the image of her departed father.

HENRY BURGUM,

a wealthy pewterer, is in middle life, burly and blustering. Physically, he is a second Dr. Johnson without the marks of scrofula or learning. Ignorant, pompous, and ungainly as he is, however, he excites an amused tolerance, which, one feels, might pass into a phase of affection, if, by the beating of tam-tams, the imp of arrogance could be expelled from his inflated chest.

BERTHA BURGUM,

his daughter, is, perhaps, of some ancestral mould. One year younger than Chatterton, she has those dewy charms of form clustering round the word, girlish. Her features are small and regular, her rippling hair is of a golden tint, and her eyes are of the deepest blue. Ethereal she might be called, were it not that, when deeply moved, her cheeks flush, her bosom heaves, and her voice trembles till reassured by its own sound, and then it flows with nervous force. A Saxon beauty she is to her lover—the embodiment of Bertha in his tragedy of 'Ælla.'

Descriptions of the Characters

JAMES THISTLETHWAITE,

a teacher in the Colston School, is in his early twenties. He is swarthy in hue and diminutive in size ; but his frame prefigures corpulence, as his hair betokens baldness in old age. His broad forehead, his twinkling black eyes, and his shapely nose lend, to the upper part of his face, a benign expression, which is contradicted by the ugly mouth and the heavy jaws below. He smiles constantly, chuckles good-naturedly as he talks, and habitually places his arm on the shoulders of friend or foe. Eternal activity on the fruitful surface of affairs, however, is indicated by an endless glide of words uttered in a nasal tone.

THOMAS BROUGHTON,

the Vicar of Mary Redcliffe and author of 'An Historical Dictionary of all Religions from the Creation of the World to this Present Time,' is a tall, handsome man in the prime of life. His complexion is olive ; his hair and eyes match the colour of his clerical garb ; his every gesture is studied, for he stalks before a mirror in his mind ; and his attitude, even while sitting, is stiff and upright, as if he had an unbending creed for a backbone. His voice is clear, cold, and incisive, like that of the accusing angel, and proclaims that the episode of

Descriptions of the Characters

scourging the changers from the temple is, to him, the whole of sacred history.

JOHN LAMBERT,

an attorney to whom Chatterton is bound, is a wiry, irritable, prosaic snip of a man, evidently afraid of his own shadow. His skin is as yellow as parchment ; his pale eyes, with inflamed lids, show red ; and his forehead, cheeks, and chin converge toward the point of his nose. He is, indeed, a human ferret that would, with equal unction, dislodge a rat from its hole or a rabbit from its burrow.

MRS. LAMBERT,

his mother, is a thin old woman, thin in every wise—thin body, thin hair, thin cheeks, thin nose, thin lips, thin voice, and a thin soul that conceives Providence to be as thin as itself.

SAM,

Lambert's footboy and Chatterton's bedfellow, is a blowzy youth, with bristling hair, a turned-up nose, and a puckered mouth. His constant stretching and yawning show that sleep is his ambition—an ambition strengthened, perhaps, by his chum's nightly inspirations.

Descriptions of the Characters

ALICE, BETTY, DOROTHY, AND AGNES,
girls in Bristol, are all in the witching teens. Alice is a stately blonde, gravely sensitive ; Betty, a tiny brunette, charmingly silly. Dorothy is plump and Agnes slender ; but both are of the usual height, both have brown hair and blue eyes, and both are romantically sentimental.

ALEXANDER CATCOTT,
the Vicar of Temple Church and author of 'A Treatise on the Deluge,' is a spare old gentleman, with a cracked voice and a shuffling gait. His lamp-bleached face is set with watery-blue eyes, is slit with a purple-lipped mouth, and is provided with a long, pointed nose that suggests poking into antiquated rubbish. His sparse, white hair, falling over his cheeks, adds to his kindly expression, and completes the illusion that he has just stepped out of the ark.

GEORGE CATCOTT,
his brother, is his junior by fifteen years. There is, indeed, a faint family-likeness, but it defies analysis ; for George is shorter and stouter than the Vicar, his eyes are darker, his nose is small and reddened at the tip, his mouth is capacious, and his voice is harsh and explosive. In brief, his looks and his manners harmonise

Descriptions of the Characters

with his habit of sputtering his decrees in an ale-house, and boasting that he climbed St. Nicholas steeple and left a pewter record of his daring under the topmost stone.

WILLIAM BARRETT,

a surgeon and author of 'The History and Antiquities of the City of Bristol,' is lanky, athletic, and featured like a Roman. Here, however, the semblance ends. A keen observer would soon note that the antiquarian has learning without culture and boldness without courage, and would rate him as a weak, sensitive man that might be killed by criticism hostile to his book.

HORACE WALPOLE,

son of the former Prime Minister of England, is fifty-three years old, short and slender, but compact and neatly made. His complexion is of an unhealthy paleness; his eyes are very dark and lively; his wig is unpowdered, combed straight and queued behind; his voice is low and musical, but his laugh is forced and uncouth, and even his smile is unpleasant. He walks with affected delicacy—knees bent and feet on tip-toe, as if afraid of a wet floor—and never wears a hat, but carries it under his arm or between his hands, as if he wished to compress it.—[*Taken from contemporaneous descriptions of Walpole.*]

Descriptions of the Characters

THOMAS HARRIS,

the Mayor of Bristol, is in the belly-god period of existence—too young to be scared into reformation, and too old to be lured into active vice. His huge feet, his stocky legs, his fat jowls, and his ponderous paunch make him appear squat, though, in reality, he is rather tall. His large, round head—with beady eyes, flat nose, and expansive mouth—flaunts a shock of coarse, black hair; and his bushy eyebrows, while he speaks or chews, wave up and down like the wings of hovering vultures. In conversation, he gives vent to a big, guttural voice, broken by gasps and grunts; and when in motion, he rolls from side to side, like a merchantman caught in the trough of the sea. His relish for turtles may be ascribed to heredity of office; for history records that the mayors of Bristol were notorious for this weakness, and that one of them, on a journey, allotted a special chariot to the green-shelled monsters, and, distrustful of country kitchen-maids, took a skilful cook along.

CAPTAIN FRANCISCO,

a highwayman, is not more than five and thirty to the view. His figure is slim and boyish; his skin is of a transparent whiteness on his forehead, but gradually

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Descriptions of the Characters

darkens to the heavy tan on his chin ; his features are effeminate in cast ; his hands and feet are small : his bearing is aristocratic ; and his dress is exquisite. There is, too, a mildness in his light-blue eyes ; but this, like his person, is deceptive, for it denotes a calmly desperate man, who, did he not live in a Broughtonian age, might be an honoured one.

MONSIEUR BARTHELEMON,

the leader of the band in Marylebone Gardens, is middle-aged, low and slender in stature, and so excitable that he expresses himself as much by antics as by words. His chronic look of outraged genius, it may be added, lends further proof that he has the artistic temperament, which claims the earth as its preserve and brands every one else a poacher.

MRS. ANGELL,

the keeper of a lodging-house, is a young matron, plump in form, comely in face, and motherly in her ways ; for she has not yet been hardened by the cares of letting rooms. Harry, her son, is an urchin of ten mischievous years ; and Bertha, her daughter, is a coy little maid of six summers, with hair so red that even her future lover can not mistake it for auburn.

The Bard
of
Mary Redcliffe

THE BARD

OF

MARY REDCLIFFE.

ACT FIRST.

SCENE.—*The muniment room near the summit of the hexagonal porch of St. Mary Redcliffe, Bristol. Four sides of the apartment are shown, three of which are pierced by a series of windows of four lights each. At the right, an oaken door opens on winding steps that lead to the roof above and to the interior of the porch below. Seven coffers of various sizes are scattered about the place. Before the rise of the curtain there is a chime of bells. Then the voices of a choir are heard faintly as the curtain rises, disclosing the moonlit room with a monk, in cowl and scapular, writing on the top of one of the coffers, by the light of a single candle. Suddenly the music increases in volume, and then diminishes*

as the closing of a heavy door is heard. As footsteps sound upon the spiral stairway, the monk blows out the candle, and conceals himself by raising the lid of the coffer. Then the Sexton, with jangling keys in one hand and a lanthorn in the other, appears and stands in the doorway, looking down the steps.

Sexton. [Holding the lanthorn above his head.]

Be careful, sir, the steps are steep and winding ;
And if you fall, you'll be whirled round so oft
You will be giddy ere you reach the bottom.

Phillips. [From below.]

Well, if I fall, I'll fall into the church.

Sexton. The door is locked and is of oak and iron :
Best keep your footing.

Phillips. [Reaching the landing and pointing up the stairway.]

Whither does this lead ?

Sexton. Unto the roof, from which there is a view
As far as Clifton and Prince Rupert's Fort.
Will you go up ?

Phillips. I'll wait till Thomas comes :
He asked me, sir, to meet him here at curfew.

Sexton. [As they enter the room.]
So your name's Phillips ; my name's Phillips, too :
We may be relatives.

Phillips.

We may, indeed.

I am the usher at the Bluecoat School
Who taught your nephew until he was bound
To Lambert, the attorney.

Sexton.

It is strange

He never spoke of you ; and yet 'tis not,
For seldom does he speak of any one
Save Canynge, who re-edified this church,
And Rowley, his priest-poet.

Phillips.

Who were alive

In reigns of Henry Sixth and Edward Fourth.

Sexton. But have you read the poems Rowley
wrote ?

Phillips. A few of them : The Parliament of Sprites,
The Bristowe Tragedy, The Tournament ;
And Thomas purposes to read to-night
A Song to Ælla.

Sexton.

Are they not beautiful ?

Phillips. As beautiful as white and red rose blended.

Sexton. My nephew found them in these very chests,
With parchment proofs that Burgum takes descent
From some old Norman knight ; and, rarer still,
A manuscript describing Master Mayor's
First passing over the old Bristol bridge
In time of Henry Third.

Phillips. What angel led
To all this coffered wealth?

Sexton. Tom's father, sir.

Phillips. I thought that Chatterton the elder died
Before his son was born.

Sexton. Both truths are true.—
Sit down upon that chest.—The Chattertons
Were sextons here two hundred years and more.

Phillips. He told me that.

Sexton. Proud is he of his birth
As a rooster of his treading; all are proud.
His father—has he told you aught of him?

Phillips. That he was master of the Pyle Street School,
And a sub-chaunter in the Cathedral here;
Was fond of music and of rare antiques—

Sexton. Too fond of music and of rare old wine.
Music or wine alone we can withstand;
But wine and music mingled, like rum-punch,
Drive us to woman or the devil, sir.

Phillips. But what of Thomas?

Sexton. Listen or narrate.
Old Chatterton, who thought his lineage made
This church his chapel, robbed these ancient chests,
And covered school books with the precious parchments.

Phillips. And he a man of learning!



Sexton. One of these
The youthful Thomas found, and fell in love
With its illuminated capitals.
Till then we thought the lad a hopeless dunce ;
For he was stupid and would sit and cry,
Saying he wept because he had been born. [*Laughs.*

Phillips. Misunderstood from birth.

Sexton. But from that day
He took to reading, as a babe to milk,
And spent his holidays within this church,
Brooding the aisles or rummaging these chests.
Why, I have seen him sit by Canynge's effigy
Two mortal hours, as white and motionless
As the alabaster angel on the tomb.

Phillips. Where is old Rowley buried ?

Sexton. No one knows :
Canynge's purse-bearer, cook, and brewer lie
In the south transept, but his poet's bones
Rest in a grave obscure.

Phillips. 'Tis very strange.
Has Thomas searched for it ?

Sexton. I can not say :
But once I came upon him in this room,
His hands and face besmeared with lead and ochre,
And when I merely asked what he was doing,

He flew into a passion, and then begged
To be left with Rowley. And away I went ;
For he could wheedle bones from kennelled hounds
Without their snarling.—Would you like to see
His birthplace? You can view it from the windows.

[*Goes to the windows and Phillips follows him.*

Phillips. Yes, show me everything and tell me all ;
For he has been secretive, and his eyes
Like the gray eyne of Dawn, are ever turned
To a golden noontide and a sunset crimson.

Sexton. Why bless my soul, you talk like Thomas, sir !
You see that building just beyond Pump Lane ?
Well, that is Pyle Street School ; behind it stands
The master's house where Chatterton was born.

Phillips. His mother lives there still ?

Sexton. No : on the hill
By the upper gate ; she keeps a dame-school now.

Male Hawker. [*From the street.*]
Hot spice gingerbread ! Hot spice gingerbread !
[*Sings.*]

It is all hot, nice smoking hot,
Or I would not so cry ;
But if you won't believe, you sot,
You need but taste and try.

Hot spice gingerbread ! Hot spice gingerbread !

Mary Redcliffe.

[ACT I.]

Sexton. [*While the cry is dying away in the distance.*]
He bakes good gingerbread.

Phillips. And makes good verse.

Sexton. That is the leaning tower of Temple Church.
Catecott, the Vicar, is a friend to Thomas;
He writes about the Deluge.

Phillips. So I hear.

Sexton. There's Burgum's house upon the Avon's
bank,
This side those fig trees in St. Peter's garden.
Barrett, the historian of Bristol, lives—

Phillips. I see the house: 'tis near the Colston School.

Sexton. Well, when perplexed he comes for aid to
Thomas.

[*Then pointing out the different Churches.*]

St. Nicholas, Christ Church, All Saints', and St. Wer-
burgh's.

Let us unto the roof: the view is better.

Phillips. But if he come?

Sexton. [*Going.*] We need not tarry long,
[*As they cross to the door, the monk rises and stands
motionless in the moonlight as if reading a parch-
ment. Then a distant bell begins to toll.*]

Phillips. [*Stopping.*] The curfew.

Sexton. Rung for ages from St. Nicholas.

Phillips. [*Glancing round and seeing the monk.*]
Look there !
Sexton. [*Turning.*] O Heaven and Mary—Rowley's
ghost !
Preserve us Saints ! [*Sinks upon his knees.*
Phillips. Rise, sir ; it is some trick.
Sexton. It is no trick !
It is no trick ! [*Then to the monk.*] If we do trespass
here,
We will depart and leave your poems sacred.
Phillips. Who are you ? Speak, or I will rush
upon you !
Sexton. [*Rising and restraining him.*]
No, we must not defy him—come away !
Phillips. I'll sound this mystery.
Sexton. Oh, let us go !
Phillips. Who are you ?
The Monk. [*Throwing off his cowl, and bursting into
laughter.*]
Thomas Chatterton !
Sexton. [*Raising the lanthorn.*] 'Tis Thomas !
Chatterton. In truth it is, for Rowley's ghost is fled.
[*Then coming down and taking their hands.*]
Forgive me, uncle and my dearest friend,
This mediæval masking. 'Twas unkind
But not foreplanned ; and jesters must be cruel.

Phillips. Why did you play the ghost?

Chatterton. 'Twas but a freak;

For when I write I do assume a guise
To lure the archaic Muse.

Phillips. [*Touching the robe.*] Was this found, too?

Chatterton. My mother made it from my own design.
You are not angry, Phillips?

Phillips. Not at all.

Chatterton. And you, dear uncle?

Sexton. [*Breathing hard.*] I have lost my speech.

Chatterton. But eyes can look forgiveness; yet 'twas
wrong,

And I will wear no more the monkish garb
When with my friends. [*Casts off the robe.*]

Phillips, shall I unmask?

Phillips. You have done so.

Chatterton. Nay, you will deem that robe
The veil of April to the cloak of March,
Which blurs the golden sun to silver patch
And dusks all England, when I do unmask.

Phillips. You speak in cipher.

Chatterton. And must so persist
Until I quench this moonlight.

[*Goes to a coffer and takes out a bundle of candles.*]

Sexton. [*Apart to Phillips.*] Have no fear :
On nights like this the boy is flighty.

Chatterton. [*Overhearing him.*] Ay !
The moon doth raise my spirits with the tides.
[*Then holding up a candle.*]

Here's that will make them ebb ; your lanthorn, uncle.

Sexton. You'll set the church on fire !

Phillips. Be quiet, sir.

Chatterton. [*Lighting the candle and returning the
lanthorn.*]

What shall we dub this struggle ? Let it be
'A Battle 'twixt the Candles and the Moon.'

[*Inverts the candle so that the tallow drops upon the chest.*]

Its blood is sluggish ; we will name it Lambert.

Hold fast, pale warrior, and oppose the Moon

In this, your castle-city—call it 'Bristol.'

[*Places the candle upright on the chest and lights another.*]

Hail Alexander Catcott, reverend Greek !

Your Treatise on the Deluge proves that you

Can squire the Nightmare in his joust with Dreams.

Stick there ! Now lend your darkling brother light.

[*Lights the third candle at the second.*]

George Catcott, you who climbed St. Nicholas' spire,

And, like an impious pigeon, left your mark

Upon the steeple, do you blanch with fear

When argent shafts from Luna's archery
 Pour through the loopholes of this donjon-keep?
*[Waves his hand toward the moonlight streaming into the
 windows; places the third candle and lights the
 fourth.]*

The cry is 'Barrett to the Rescue!' Come,
 Historian, bold when tilting 'gainst the truth;
 Stand firm: the airy arrows of the nymph
 Glance from your head-piece. *[Places the fourth candle.]*
 Fancy faints—more light!

[Lights the fifth candle hurriedly.]
 I would not have her dwindle into death.
 There, Thomas Harris, gross and greasy Mayor.
[Places the fifth candle and lights the sixth.]
 Now, Thistlethwaite, stand upright if you can.
[Places the sixth candle and lights the seventh.]

The last pale knight—shall it be christened 'Phillips'?
 Nay, Phillips is for me, I for the Moon,
 And all for Phantasy!—Courage, old Cutts.
*[Places the last candle, rises, and looks first at the dimmed
 moonlight and then at the seven burning candles.]*

The Candles win!—the Seven of the Storm,
 That dwell within the hollows of the Earth
 And ride in chariots drawn by dappled deer,
 Have quite eclipsed the Moon, and Fancy's dead.

Sexton. Have you gone mad?

Phillips. I see it all, dear Thomas :
It is your battle, and you fight alone ;
May I be your ally?

Chatterton. [*Seizing his hand.*] O Phillips, Phillips !
'Twas but a needful prelude to my tale.
I am encompassed by a host of fools :
You cannot blame me if I wear a mask.

Phillips. I do not blame you.

Sexton. And I see no mask.

Chatterton. You know of Rowley, Phillips?

Phillips. Yes.

Chatterton. His works?

Phillips. What you have read to me.

Chatterton. Are they of worth?

Phillips. Surpassing worth !

Chatterton. Why then, if after charm
Low chanted in some weird Egyptian strain,
A waving wand, a rolling of the eyes,
A sprinkling of a powder on these flames—
These seven mystic flames—he should arise,
What would you say ?

Sexton. [*In alarm.*] He's mad !

Chatterton. Would welcome him?

Phillips. As warmly as if Chaucer leaped to life.

Chatterton. I am the monk.

Phillips.

Impossible !

Sexton.

Alas !

Chatterton. O doubting Thomas, had old Rowley lived,
Think you my father would have covered books
With golden fleece like this? [*Holds out a manuscript.*

Phillips.

That did seem strange.

Chatterton. Burgum lacks birth—I find it for him
here ;

Barrett needs chronicles—The Yellow Roll
And Rowley's version of Turgot are found ;
Bristolians soon will celebrate their bridge—
In Felix Farley's Journal will appear
A rare account, in quaint old English writ,
Of how the bridge was opened ages past.

Phillips. Too opportune for truth.

Chatterton.

You wish more proof?

Give me a theme : be it the nameless knight
That in the transept lies with crossèd legs
To signify three visits to the shrine ;
Or Admiral Penn's iron gauntlets, sword, cuirass,
And helmet with the rampant lion's crest,
Which rust beneath his trophies in the nave.
Give me an olden theme, one moonlit night ;
Then hear my song.

Phillips. I could not doubt your voice,
Could I rebut your words.

Sexton. 'Tis marvellous !

Chatterton. Here is a song to Ælla, nesh and clean
As sacrificial lamb. I'll antique it.

[*Takes from a coffer a piece of ochre in a brown pan,
charcoal dust in a pounce-box, black-lead powder in
a bottle ; then rubs the ochre on the parchment.*]

This lends the fragrance of the Tudor rose.

[*Sprinkles the charcoal over it.*]

This, of two roses—York and Lancaster.

[*Holds up the bottle of black-lead.*]

This used : 'twould savour of the golden broom,
Whose Gallic seedling in our English soil
Quickened to mighty oak—Plantagenet.

[*Throws the parchment upon the floor, runs his foot over
it, and then crumples it in his hand.*]

When they need more, I smoke them in the chimney.

Phillips. [*Examining the parchment.*] It is well
done.

Sexton. [*Looking over his shoulder.*] Ay, marvel-
lously well.

Chatterton. Note the calligraphy, old words and all.
There's wondrous sorcery in spelling, Phillips.

Phillips. None could detect—

Chatterton. Not even Horace Walpole.
But you shall see, for I have sent to him
The Ryse of Peyncteynge, wroten by T. Rowleie ;
And you will hear him drum and see him lift,
Like partridge whirring to the fowler's call.

Sexton. He may discover—

Chatterton. No.

Phillips. But if he should ?

Chatterton. What then ? Did he not publish his own
work,

The Castle of Otranto, as antique ?

Phillips. Why not be open ?

Chatterton. I have tried it, Phillips :
I once told Barrett, and he said I lied ;
Nor would my poems be received as mine
Till verdict was recorded past recall.
Were I to leave this arrow-lede to fame,
What of my mother ? She is aging fast,
And I have deepened furrows on her brow.

Phillips. Your course in this seems clear.

Chatterton. Why, who is wronged ?
If these blood-rubies flash Promethean fire,
What matter whom they dight, myself or Rowley ?—
Dear uncle, Burgum will be here to-night.

Sexton. Not here ?

Chatterton. Yes, here : will you meet him below
And light him up the steps?

Sexton. [*Going.*] That will I do,
Be it for monk or nephew.

Chatterton. Thank you, uncle. [*Exit Sexton.*
Phillips, for giving Burgum Norman sires,
My only plea is that I am part boy ;
That he abused me, and I linked the lies
To sport myself against the pompous man.
I had not met her then. She comes with him
To see where Rowley's soul is sepulchred.

Phillips. Who comes?

Chatterton. Her name—think me not overfond—
His daughter—Burgum's daughter.

Phillips. And do you—

Chatterton. I hold my life less dear to me than art,
And she is dearer than my dearest verse.
More, gentle friend, I need not say to you :
To word my love were to abase my love.

Phillips. Does she responsive act?

Chatterton. No, not to me :
She is in love with Rowley.

Phillips. When she learns
That Canynge's bard has less of earthly mould
Than the purple image of a thunder-cloud

Beheld in dreamful waters, will she change?

Chatterton. The world and she will love me when
I say

‘I am old Rowley—all he wrote is mine!’

[*A wild burst of laughter rises from the street.*]

Drunkards carousing at the Old Fox Inn.

I would their laugh had come less timely, Phillips;

For trifles haunt me.

Phillips. ’Twas but Chance at play.

Chatterton. Nay, Fate may justly scourge me when I
claim

The works of Thomas Rowley.—Do not laugh.

Phillips. What do you mean?

Chatterton. I feel that Rowley lives!

Last night I saw him in the moonlight there

As plain as I see you; and he was weeping.

Each crystal tear-drop seemed a little world

Of sorrow falling from its native sphere.

Phillips. ’Twas all a dream.

Chatterton. It may have been, and yet—

Do you think, Phillips, that the mind can bear

Real, living spirits never clothed in flesh,

That act and suffer as we dream they do—

Making truth fancy and all fancy truth?

Phillips. Mind then usurps creative power.

Chatterton. Not so :
God moving on the brain, the heart, the soul—
The nobler part ; not on this lecherous frame.
The one you worship, Phillips, was so born.

Phillips. Such things are past our ken.

Chatterton. But not our sight :
And I would swim upon this wave of thought
Though it bear me to madness.

Phillips. As you please.

Chatterton. Will Shakespeare had three children
scarcely fit
To run on four legs and to nibble grass :
Must Hamlet, Portia, Desdemona die
And his gross offspring live ?—'Tis past belief.

Phillips. It is not writ that fancy ends with death,
And, in our fancy, they may live for aye.

Chatterton. Nay, they must have a separate existence,
Or heaven is all a dream. What would life be
With Vicar Catcott paddling o'er the flood
In search of flotsam from old Noah's ark ;
Or his fool-brother clambering up a spire ;
Or Barrett trudging o'er a Roman camp ;
Or Thistlethwaite, your colleague and my friend,
A charlatan, a hypocrite, a cur—

Phillips. And Burgum—

Chatterton.

Is her father ; let him pass.

When I am weary of the things called real,
 I summon Rowley and his phantom crew.
 We catch the shimmering life-lines of the moon,
 Thrown out to drowning souls, and all aboard,
 Sail past the mysteries of endless space.
 Past Jupiter, white as is the god of power
 Enthroned on adamant ; an eagle perched
 Upon his gauntlet, and around him grouped
 The Northern Winds that battle with the Plagues.
 Past silver Mercury, where the god of wit
 Lolls on an emerald seat ; beneath his foot
 A wild hyena laughing, at his back
 An ape that chatters wisdom in his ear.
 Past yellow Saturn, from whose ebon state,
 Infest with scorpions, basilisks, and toads,
 The god of melancholy rules those Winds
 On which ride Ague, Palsy, and Despair,
 And fell Consumption with her glittering eyes.
 Past ruddy Mars, where on carved jasper sits
 The choleric god in tabard dyed vermilion ;
 A vulture on his right, and on his left
 A mastiff and a panther held in leash,
 While frantic Fevers antic near their liege.
 Past Venus, green as is the western sky

Set with a golden sun ; where rosy nymphs
Rise from a violet sea, and on a couch
Of orient ruby lies the goddess, Love,
Fanned by her swarthy slave, the Southern Wind,
The pearly tints of morning on her form
And midnight in her hair.

Phillips. 'Tis beautiful !

Chatterton. Thence to the zenith, past the throne of
God ;

So close we hear the voices of the angel choir
And see the face of Christ !

Phillips. [*Starting to his feet.*] Your words are
wild !

Chatterton. Oh, when I feel an ecstasy like this,
The world may sink to hell !—Forgive me, Phillips :
The moon is full and I am in a frenzy !

[*Throws his arms about Phillips and bursts into
tears.*]

Phillips. Dear Thomas !

Chatterton. Yes, I know : I can not tread
The star-dust pathway to the Northern Lights,
Whence truth shines dimly through vast bergs of ice ;
Nor drink the magic vintage of the night,
Which spirits vision that o'erwhelms the sense :
Flesh must have ground and water.

[Laughter as if the roisters were leaving the Inn is heard and then the sound of voices on the stairs.]

Phillips.

They are coming.

Chatterton. Yes, Burgum and his—

Phillips.

Why, you pale and shake

As if Saturnian wind swept over you.

Chatterton. Hope lies with folded wings in white cocoon ;

Then bursts to light, a rainbow-tinted joy,

With tearful vans that flutter ere they fly.—

Oh, I shall flush and stammer like a fool !

You do not smile : you have a poet's heart.

[Enter the SEXTON, MRS. CHATTERTON, and her daughter MARY.]

Mother !

Mrs. Chatterton. Do not be attery, Tommy.

Chatterton. *[Going to her and embracing her.]* No.

O mother dear, it seems almost a crime

For me to love another.

Mary. *[Roguishly.]*

Oh, indeed !

Chatterton. *[Kissing her.]* Not you, sweet sister.

Mary.

No, but some one else,

Or you have changed ; for when you were but six,

To lure you from the lumber room, we said

Your little sweetheart, Sukey Webb, was come.

Chatterton. Poor Sukey !—My mother and my sister,
Phillips.

[*Phillips bows and the women courtesy.*]

Receive him, mother, as my trusty friend,
Most meet to be my dear associate
In my best moments. He has my Rowley secret.

Sexton. And my family name.

Chatterton. Uncle, remember Burgum.

Sexton. The pewterer had melted in my mind.

[*Exit Sexton.*]

Mrs. Chatterton. [*Taking eatables from a basket and
putting them on a coffer, while Mary and Phillips
converse.*]

I've brought you sheep tongues and a pot of tea—
Alack, the tea is cold !

Chatterton. It matters not :

By gorging I would make myself more dull
Than God has made me.

Mrs. Chatterton. You must eat, Tommy.

Chatterton. Please, mother, call me Thomas or plain
Tom :

Think you that Shakespeare ever did permit
A soul to call him Billy ?

Mrs. Chatterton. It shall be Thomas.

Chatterton. For Rowley's sake, not mine.

Mrs. Chatterton. [*Handing him a tongue.*] Now, son, eat this.

Chatterton. Do you know, mother, I could give that tongue

The eloquence of Pitt or make it sing
Like Chaucer?—I will eat it by-and-by. [*Returns it.*

Phillips. Your sister says you seldom eat.

Mary. Or sleep.

Chatterton. I have a queasy stomach ; for I feed
With Lambert's scullion at the kitchen board,
And with the footboy lodge, when I am one
To lie with kings and feel they break my rest.

Phillips. He is a brute !

Chatterton. And you the prince of friends
To check my vapouring with sympathy
And not with chiding.

Mrs. Chatterton. Chiding makes him worse.

Mary. Both Lambert and his mother treat him
ill.

Chatterton. Their day will pass.

Mrs. Chatterton. And yours will come, my son.
I well remember when you were a child
You would not read from out a little book ;
And in the games you were the master-man
With all your playmates servants ; once you said,

‘Paint me an angel with a trumpet, mother,
To blow my name throughout the listening world.’

Chatterton. Think me not wholly vain and selfish,
Phillips.

I feel like a spokesman of a Saxon king,
With parchment credence bearing royal seal :
Proud of entrusted power, resolved to gain
The vantage in the league for my own folk.

[*Puts his arm round his mother.*

Mrs. Chatterton. Selfish ! why, when he toddled by
my side,

His tiny fingers holding to my gown,
He begged for pennies to give beggars, sir.

Phillips. He is a manly boy, a boyish man ;
Self-willed, impetuous, full of fire divine,
And yet, withal, befooled by fools to folly.

[*Footsteps and voices on the stairs again are heard,
and Chatterton shows signs of agitation.*

Mrs. Chatterton. Your words have hurt him, sir.

Chatterton.

No, mother, no :

He is as kind to me as Joseph was
To Benjamin.—My guests are coming up.

Mrs. Chatterton. Then I will make things tidy.

[*Puts the eatables into the basket.*

Mary.

Who are they, Tom ?

Phillips. Miss Burgum and her father.

Mary.

Oh !

Sexton. [*Arriving on the landing.*] This way, sir.

Burgum. Whew ! surely I have climbed from hell to heaven.

Enter the SEXTON followed by HENRY BURGUM.

Chatterton. [*To Phillips.*] His daughter has not come.

Burgum. [*Gruffly.*]

Well, Chatterton.

Chatterton. My mother, sister, Thomas Phillips, sir.

Burgum. [*Scarcely noticing them.*] My Pedigree is finished, eh ?

Chatterton.

It is.

Burgum. Then let me see it.

[*Chatterton goes to a coffer.*

Mrs. Chatterton.

Pleasant evening, sir.

Burgum. You'd say that, madam, had Æolus loosed
The ventus and sonorus tempestates.

Phillips. Luctantes ventos tempestatesque sonoras
Is the line you seek.

Burgum.

Well, let it be the line :

We men of birth leave Latin to our clerks.

Chatterton. [*Returning and giving a manuscript to
Burgum.*]

That is your Pedigree which I have traced

From Simon de Seyncte Lyze, a Norman knight,
Who came with William First, and then was made
Earl of Northampton.

Burgum.

Noble to the core !

Chatterton. Observe this Patent in the Latin tongue,
Granting the right to Asheton and Sir Trafford
To change base metals into precious ones.

Burgum. That knights my trade ; for I melt tin and
lead

To purest pewter.

Phillips. [*To Mary.*]

A subtle compliment.

Burgum. [*Reads.*] ‘Per Artem sive Scientiam Phi-
losophiæ.’

[*Then with an air of learning.*]

Through Art or Science of Philosophy.

We can translate when we are in the humour.

[*Glances over several pages.*]

It is a lengthy Pedigree.—What’s this ?

[*Reads.*] ‘Radcliff de Chatterton of Chatterton,
The General Heir of many Families.’

You knave ! you put that in to raise yourself.

Chatterton. Consult the March and Garter Records,
sir.

Burgum. To hell with them ! What is that in your
hand ?

Chatterton. This, sir, is the de Bergham Coat-of-arms.

Burgum. My Coat-of-arms!—by heaven, it shall be
graved

In granite o'er my door.

Phillips.

Like the odd device

Of Abbot Nailheart o'er the Lower Gateway.

Burgum. When did he live?

Chatterton.

Three centuries ago.

Burgum. Only three centuries—an upstart man!

Name me the bearings of such royal hues

On my escutcheon.

Chatterton. [*Taking the Arms.*] On this quarter or
There is a checky cross argent and azure
Between four crosses, sir, pattee—

Burgum.

By God!

These blood-red crosses blazon holiness

In every one of my illustrious sires.

Phillips. It ended in your father.

Burgum.

Save your breath

To pay respect to one of such descent.

Chatterton. An azure field with fess indented argent
Between three heads of stags cabossèd gules
And armèd or.

Burgum.

Most lordly sportsmen all!

Chatterton. Argent, a bend vair or and azure 'tween
Spears bendwise gules.

Burgum. You rob my lungs of air!

Phillips. Enough is left for swearing.

Burgum. Hold your tongue!

Chatterton. Barry of fourteen pieces purpure, sir,
And ermine, with chevronel engrailèd or,
Surmounted by another counter-changed.
Beneath you see inserted in a scroll—

Enter BERTHA with the Sexton's lanthorn.

Burgum. [*Noticing Chatterton's confusion.*]

What ails the fool?

Chatterton. [*Significantly.*] The motto is 'Ryde on!'

Burgum. [*To Bertha.*] What were you doing?

Bertha. Examining the walls
That Rowley's hands have touched, the steps of stone
His weary feet have worn, and, part way up,
The door that opens to a deadly fall.

Burgum. You silly girl, here are our Pedigree
And Coat-of-arms!

Flower-Girl. [*From the street.*] Buy my rosemary,
buy sweet briar! Rosemary and sweet briar O!

[*Sings.*]

Rosemary and briar sweet
I every day do cry

Through every square and street;
Come buy it sweet, come buy it dry!

Rosemary and sweet briar O!

[As the cry is heard, Thistlethwaite steals up the stairway, peers into the room, and then goes up the steps toward the roof.]

Bertha. *[To Chatterton.]* Where are those poems, sir?

Chatterton. Within that chest.

Burgum. You shall not look at them!

Chatterton. The voice of that belated flower-girl tells
That rosemary and sweet briar prove a drug
To hot spice gingerbread.

Bertha. And soulful songs
To coats-of-arms.

Burgum. Damn Rowley and his songs!

Chatterton. 'Tis useless, then, for me to tell you, sir,
That in the Fourteenth century there lived
One, John de Bergham, who made several books,
Translated Homer into English verse,
And wrote this ballad, 'The Romance of the Knight.'

Burgum. Give me that poem! What new glory
next?

Here is a poet you may love, my girl.

[*Takes the parchment and attempts to read it.*]

I should have brought my eye-glass.

Bertha. [*Looking at it.*] 'Tis old English.

Chatterton. [*Taking the parchment and reading.*]

'The sunne ento Vyrgyne was gotten,
The floureys al arounde onspryngede—'

I have the poem modernised at home.

Burgum. Most beautiful! superb! There is a
crown:

I patronise the Muse when she appears

In noble form. [*Gives him a crown.*]

Bertha. [*After again looking at the parchment.*]

It does not equal Rowley.

Burgum. Bah! Rowley was a monk. But let us go:
Barrett must see this ere he goes to bed.

I'll call to-morrow for your version, boy.

Chatterton. Uncle.

Sexton. I will attend them to the street.

Bertha. Good-night to all.

[*Exeunt Sexton, Burgum, and Bertha.*]

Mrs. Chatterton. That man was so uncivil.

Phillips. He is an ignorant, presumptuous fellow,
And swears profanely.

Mary.

True!

Chatterton. If Burgum roils
Your placid current, Phillips, think of mine—
An Avon flood that tides o'er fouling mud
Past beauteous scenes.—Is Bertha not most fair?

Phillips. Yes, very fair.

Mrs. Chatterton. No fairer than my son.

Phillips. Or daughter, madam.

Mary. Oh!

Chatterton. He is sincere.

Phillips. [*A little embarrassed.*]

Well, I must go, or I shall be reproved
By our head-master.

Chatterton. [*Taking up the seventh candle.*]

Cutts will be our torch.

Phillips, give Burgum's crown to that flower-girl.

Mary. Are you not coming?

Chatterton. No further than the porch.

Phillips. Then I will take your mother to her
door.

Mrs. Chatterton. You are so thoughtful.

Chatterton. These steps are treacherous.

[*Excunt all. While their laughter is heard rising
from the stairway, Thistlethwaite steals down the
steps from above the muniment room, hurries to
one of the coffers, and ransacks it, now and then*

stopping to listen. Then he goes from coffer to coffer and examines the contents of each.

Watchman. [From the street.] Past nine o'clock and a moonlight night! Past nine o'clock and a moonlight night! Past nine o'clock and a moonlight night!

[As the cry grows fainter and fainter, Chatterton, with the lighted candle still in his hand, enters the room and, running noiselessly to Thistlethwaite, seizes him by the throat and holds the candle to his face.]

Chatterton. You thief!

Thistlethwaite. [Struggling.] Unhand me!

Chatterton. Stealing on your knees!

Thistlethwaite. Let loose, I say!

Chatterton, Not yet, friend Thistlethwaite.

Thistlethwaite. Your gripe is strangling me!

Chatterton. Best cease to writhe;

For scuffling ever rouses me to rage,

And I may hurl you down those steps, you toad,

And with your venom spatter all the stones.

Thistlethwaite. What have I done to you?

Chatterton. What would you do?

Tear from my throat a carcanet of gems

In pendent sparkles richer than the rays

Of the Golconda brilliant ; and clasp it, too,
About your scurfy neck.

Thistlethwaite. It is not yours.

Chatterton. Take it by law and not by looting,
then.

Thistlethwaite. What right have you—

Chatterton. The right of one who ploughs
Through unkeeled seas to sunset lands untrod—
A Cabot's right.

[*Then forcing him down as he attempts to rise.*

Remain upon your knees !

You churchman without charity or grace ;
You scholar without learning or its trend ;
You statesman without honesty or depth,
Cleaning the ponderous shoes of petty men
To earn a pennyworth of parish power ;
You flea in both activity and poise,
Hop on some mangy cur, your proper prey,
And cease tormenting else. And now begone !

[*Flings him gasping upon the floor.*

Thistlethwaite. [*Rising.*] The Vicar shall know all.

Chatterton. You shall not say

That I am niggard of this copper race
Inhabiting my West. Take them for slaves.

[*Takes up a parchment and glances at it.*]

This is a Testament that doth bequeath
A negro boy named Tallow. It comes pat.
[*Throws it to Thistlethwaite and takes up another.*]

This, a Petition from the Vestry here
To Bishop Secker, asking him to grant
A faculty for one fair organ built
Without his sanction. 'Twas a sinful past !
[*Throws it to Thistlethwaite and takes up a third.*]

This is the Will of Sarah Deane, who leaves
To her god-daughter one brass kettle pot,
Her green say apron, and worst little bed ;
And to her son, in solemn terms of law,
Her scarlet petticoat with gold galooome
That he may make a waistcoat of the cloth.
[*Throws it to Thistlethwaite.*]

But Friendship reckoning when she lends to friend
Should be by measure paid. Give well, give all !

[*Throws armfuls of the parchments over Thistlethwaite.*]

Thistlethwaite. You have the Rowley poems under
bolt,
And I shall find the key.

Chatterton.

Nay, spare your pains :

Not all the power of England could unlock
The coffer of old Rowley's manuscripts !

Mary Redcliffe.

[ACT I.]

Enter BERTHA.

Bertha. I thought they still were here. [*Turns to go.*

Chatterton. Oh, do not go!—

Wait the departure of this gentleman.

[*Then as she is about going, he quickly adds.*]

The passageway is narrow down the steps.

[*Points to the door, and Thistlethwaite departs.*]

He came to filch what I so freely give.

Bertha. You will call me a robber when you learn
That, slipping from my father, I have come
To purloin a Rowley poem.

Chatterton. Nay, to claim

What was inspired by you.

Bertha. By me?

Chatterton. Who knows

But that a soul may love a soul unborn

And centuries removed? His Ælla loved

The Saxon maiden, Bertha.

Bertha. Mystic praise!

And my reply, good-night. [*Turns toward the door.*

Chatterton. Resolve the word

And say 'Good-death and speed you to your doom!'

Bertha. [*Stopping.*] Is that from Rowley?

Chatterton. 'Tis a paraphrase.

Bertha. [*Again going.*] Good-bye.

Chatterton. That word spun him a priestly frock,
As heavenly orbs foretold.

Bertha. [*Turning.*] What heavenly orbs?

Chatterton. Venus and Saturn were his parent stars ;
And oft he watched them from the windows here.

[*Goes to the windows and Bertha follows him.*]

There's Saturn shining with malefic light
To blast his babes ; and there is Venus, too,
In fell conjunction with the jaundiced god,
As on that natal hour.

Bertha. Dear Rowley's hour !

Chatterton. The horoscope ascendant at his birth
Was Gemini, with Mercury lord thereof,
Who gives the stringéd shell.

Bertha. 'Twas well bestowed.

Chatterton. The Moon, the lady of the second house,
Was posited malignant in the twelfth,
The gaol-house of the skies, foreboding want
And even prison chains ; but Jupiter shone
From out the pasture of the plunging Bull,
And dimmed her baleful rays.

Bertha. Well done, bright star !

Chatterton. [*Coming from the windows.*]
The crescent Moon allied the sinking Sun
In twilight coalition 'gainst the child ;

And from their proper houses rushed the stars
With steely spears, as if to slay wild boar ;
But from his laurelled helmet, lightning-proof,
Their points fell blunt, till Venus hurled her darts,
Ensteeped in Saturn's bane, and pierced his heart.

Bertha. Poor, star-crossed bard !

Chatterton. [*Showing her a parchment.*]

Here is a swan-like song.

'Tis yellowed by the feet of pilgrim years
And wrinkled by the clutch of times profane ;
Writ in his blood and blurred with burning tears.

[*Covers his face with his hands and sinks upon a chest.*

Bertha. [*Kneeling beside him.*]

Tell me of him ; and when I read his verse,
The meaning of his life will mingling flow
And clear the cloudy lines.

Chatterton.

The tale is sad :

His youth was travail ; life in fulness came
When he beheld her first.

Bertha.

Who was the lady ?

Chatterton. A maid as beautiful and free from guile
As roseate baby slumber.

Bertha.

And her name ?

Chatterton. The name of Ælla's love.

Bertha. 'Twas Bertha, then.

Chatterton. The vision took its christening from the
real.

Bertha. He must have loved her well.

Chatterton. Too well for speech :

His love uprose like snowdrop in the snow,
And flowers were its interpreters.

Bertha. Chaste flowers !

Chatterton. At first he sent her lilacs to unveil
The purpled birth of passion.

Bertha. I would have worn
White hawthorn buds to token purest hope.

Chatterton. Then lovely speedwells and geraniums wild,
Plucked on the lofty cliffs whose summits catch
The nightingale's first ecstasy of song
As it comes o'er the Avon from Leigh Woods,
Like blissful voice across the gorge of death.

Bertha. St. Vincent's Rocks !

Chatterton. Then pinks in native cress,
Heart's-ease, and rath primroses sprigged with broom ;
For he was young and humble in his love.
And then dog-roses in their leaves and thorns,
Blue periwinkles and their pallid friends,
The florets of the wind, with sprays of heath,
The weed of solitude.

Bertha. And no response?
A scarlet poppy should have decked her hair.

Chatterton. Ere summer and the autumn rolled away,
He sent her marigolds with jasmine buds ;
The meadow saffron with the bitter-sweet ;
And in the chilling winter of his heart,
Garlands of aloe, cypress, and dead leaves,
With all the blooms denoting love's despair
Entwined in mystic order ; and at last,
The plant that whispers in the Spanish tongue
' I perish, maiden, if you love me not ! '

Bertha. Scarlet geranium for her stupid head
And laurel for his brow ! Did she reply ?

Chatterton. Her passion, like the laurel, blossomed
late :
Her lover, Rowley, had espoused the Church.

Bertha. She must have loved.

Chatterton. She was in love with Homer ;
For he was elder, and he wrote in Greek.

Bertha. [*Rising suddenly and placing her hand on the
flowers at her breast.*] You sent these lilacs, sir !

Chatterton. [*Sinking upon his knee.*] O lady, hear !
Hear one whose pride will bend the knee to naught
Save Mary Redcliffe, England, and yourself.

Bertha. What does this mean ?

Chatterton. That you are like the maid
Who wore the fragrant emblems of his love
Upon her breast, and threw his heart away.

Bertha. Alas ! what can I do ?

Chatterton. Wear hedgerow flowers,
And they shall be as sacred in my thoughts
As the buds that blow for May-day and for Yule
On Glastonbury thorn.

Bertha. I must not stay.

Chatterton. Nay, drive me not to winter and dead
leaves.

Bertha. I much regret—

Chatterton. Oh, leave me only hope !
And you shall find a poet living now
Who will unstring to none. I am but young,
A man in song though still a boy in years :
Let love come flooding in, like moonlight there,
And I will make the monkish Rowley seem
A cawing chough beside a spring-tide thrush.
Yea ! in the summered plenitude of power,
I will envelop you in golden showers
Of sparks dilating with celestial fire !

Bertha. You frighten me ! Some one is on the steps !

[*Voices and footsteps are heard.*]

Chatterton. What mortal can oppose the potent stars ?

'Tis Saturn's work ! I hear them coming up,
Like those two shuffling knaves in Berkeley Castle
Who killed an English king.—Be not afraid :
I shall be commonplace in daylight, lady.

Enter the SEXTON, BROUGHTON, and THISTLETHWAITE.

Broughton. What business have you here ?

Chatterton. Not much nor little.

Broughton. Miss Burgum, your surprise me.

Bertha. I confess

That I was not discreet.

Chatterton. The fault is mine :

I lured the lady with some lays of old

Writ by a priestly hand.

Broughton. Those selfsame lays

Belong to Mary Redcliffe, not to you.

Chatterton. O reverend sir, I should reply in wrath,
Were you not Vicar to the dearest Saint
In dearest England.

Broughton. You are idolatrous !

Chatterton. Then lead me from another wilderness :
Glad me with countenance and counsel, sir,
And I shall be as open as the skies
In every thought ; uprear our broken spire,
Until its gilded vane shall gleam afar
And guide the future o'er forbidding seas

To bless your memory. Pause ere you speak :
This is my fallow hour.

Broughton.

Your nonsense hour.

Richard, debar your nephew from this church,
Or you shall be dismissed. Friend Thistlethwaite,
We will explore these coffers in the morning.

Thistlethwaite. He may have manuscripts of value
hid.

Chatterton. Keep him to silence, or behold a deed
Loosed from religion and the bonds of love.

Broughton. Restrain your anger in this holy place.—
Miss Burgum, I am walking past your house.

[*Then taking the lanthorn from the Sexton.*]

Remain behind and see your nephew out.

[*As Bertha crosses to the door, the lilacs fall from her breast. She hesitates for a moment, and then hurriedly joins the Vicar on the landing. Chatterton picks up the lilacs, and, sinking upon a coffer, buries his face in the flowers. Broughton, Bertha, and Thistlethwaite go down the steps, leaving the Sexton standing near the door, looking with pity at his nephew. Then the voices of the choir are heard singing the close of the service, and Chatterton suddenly raises his head with a look of exaltation.*]

Mary Redcliffe.

[ACT I.

Chatterton. The voice of Mary Redcliffe !

Sexton. Shall we go ?

Chatterton. Not for a thousand vicars self-ordained.

Sexton. We must not linger.

Chatterton. Oh, give me to-night :
Some mystic presence hovers in the air.

Sexton. Put out the candles, then, lest he detect
That you have not gone home.

Chatterton. [*After blowing out all of the candles except the second.*] Take Catcott, uncle.
The ark was lighted by the ruddy glow
Of carbuncles. Good-night.

Sexton. Good-night, my boy.

[*Exit Sexton. Chatterton kisses the lilacs, and then, going to the coffer at which he was first seen, takes up a manuscript.*]

Chatterton. This Ode to Freedom must be writ by
dawn. [*Reads.*]

‘ Hard as the thunder doth she drive it on,
Wit skilfully whimpled guides it to his crown ;
His long sharp spear, his spreading shield is gone ;
He falls, and falling rolleth thousands down.
War, gore-faced War, by Envy burled arist,
His fiery helm ynodding to the air,
Ten bloody arrows in his straining fist—’

[He stops, runs his fingers through his hair, and then walks up and down repeating the last line at intervals.]

‘Ten bloody arrows in his straining fist!’

Ah me! the line hath quite o’erwhelmed my fancy.

I am worn—a ghostly whisper bids me rest:

I’ll sleep. *[Rolls up the monk’s robe for a pillow, and lies down upon the coffer in the moonlight.]*

When you are ready, Rowley, wake me.

[As he sinks into slumber, with one hand holding the bunch of lilacs falling over the side of the chest, the vision of a monk gradually appears dawning in his dreams. Chatterton moves uneasily, smiles in his sleep; and the curtain slowly descends as the choral music dies away.]

ACT SECOND.

SCENE.—*John Lambert's house in Bristol. A great oak-panelled hall, once the chapel of William Canynge, with a tessellated pavement and a gallery running along the wall at the right. The high-pitched timber roof, with central louvre or lanthorn, is supported by curved bracing ribs resting on corbels of demi-angels bearing shields. At the back, a massive staircase, with quaint newel heads, bases and handrails, rises a few steps to a large landing, from which a narrow flight of stairs leads to the gallery above. A casement of stained glass, in the centre of this landing, forms an entrance to the garden, and, when open, discloses trees, the Avon, and part of the city beyond. At the right, is an archway or main entrance to the hall; at the left, are a doorway to the parlour and, further down, a sculptured mantelpiece representing the Judgment of Solomon. Rich rugs are spread here and there over the tiles; a carved oaken table and chairs of antique design are near the archway; and near the mantelpiece are a smaller table, several chairs, and a curious old settle. Candelabra, law*

books, and some faded flowers are on the table. At the rise of the curtain, the sunlight is streaming in many colours through the casement, and the glow from a log fire is reddening the lower part of the hall. Lambert and his mother, one reading a newspaper and the other a book, are seated before the fire.

Lambert. [Looking up from his newspaper.]

Well, yesterday that squint-eyed profligate,
John Wilkes, came out of King's Bench.

Mrs. Lambert. Who is he, son?

Lambert. The publisher of Number Forty-five
Of the North Briton; for which he was gaoled
And expelled from Parliament four several times.

Mrs. Lambert. Chatterton shouted 'Wilkes and Liberty!'

Lambert. 'The fool!—and here are forty-five more
fools,

Who purpose dining Thursday at The Crown
In honour of the demagogue's enlargement.
The dinner will consist of forty-five
Large loaves of bread, and forty-five pounds each
Of beef, of veal, of pork, and roasted pig;
With bowls of punch and gallons of old ale
And papers of tobacco—forty-five.

Mrs. Lambert. Enough of that : it jars so with these sermons.

Lambert. Here is a letter telling how to treat
The small-pox to preserve the skin from marks ;
Written by Mrs. Stewart, Racquet Court,
Who lived in South Carolina many years.

Mrs. Lambert. The subject is unpleasant.

Lambert. This describes
The Friars passing over the old bridge
As chronicled in ancient manuscripts.

Mrs. Lambert. That is of interest.

Lambert. It is oddly spelled,
And signed by—Dunhelmus Bristolensis.

[*Reads.*] ‘On Fridaie was the time fixed for passing
the new brydge. Aboute the time of tollynge the
tenth clock—’

Enter FOOTBOY yawning.

Footboy. The Reverend Thomas Broughton, sir, is
here.

Lambert. Let him come in. [*Exit Footboy.*]

Mrs. Lambert. Do not subscribe a farthing.

Lambert. Perhaps he seeks advice.

Mrs. Lambert. Not at the house.

Enter FOOTBOY followed by BROUGHTON and
THISTLETHWAITE.

Lambert. [*Rising and going to the visitors.*]

This is an unexpected pleasure, Vicar.—

And Mr. Thistlethwaite.

Broughton. I see you know—

Lambert. The author of ‘The Brilliant Men of
Bristol,’

In which my life is traced, is known to all.

Thistlethwaite. Dear Mr. Lambert, you are overkind ;
For what I wrote of you and others, sir,
Is history—not favour.

Mrs. Lambert. A noble youth !

You both are welcome.

Lambert. Be seated, gentlemen.

Broughton. I much deplore that such a kindly greeting
Must usher painful business.

Lambert. Painful business ?

Broughton. You have, sir, an apprentice,

Lambert. Chatterton !

Broughton. Who, from the lockless coffers of my
church,

Has taken parchments.

Thistlethwaite. Of historic value.

Lambert. I’ll beat him for the theft !

Broughton. [*Taking a newspaper from his pocket.*]

There’s an account,

In Felix Farley's Journal of to-day,
Of how the Friars passed the Bristol bridge.

Mrs. Lambert. We were about to read it when you came.

*Enter ALICE, BETTY, DOROTHY, and AGNES
with bunches of flowers.*

Alice. Oh, pardon us!—we thought you were alone ;
For Sam was sleeping soundly at the door.

Mrs. Lambert. [*Going to them.*]
Come in, come in : you all know Mr. Broughton
And Mr. Thistlethwaite. [*The girls courtesy.*

Betty. We came to bring
Some Bath buns and some flowers.

Mrs. Lambert. Charming girls !
Go to the parlour and amuse yourselves
Till we are through with business.

Dorothy. May we go
Into the garden ?

Mrs. Lambert. As you wish, my dear ;
I'll call you soon.

Dorothy. Oh, do not be in haste.
[*Exeunt girls laughing into the garden.*

Mrs. Lambert. How sweet to be so loved !

Thistlethwaite. I've seen those girls
Walking with Chatterton in College Green.

Mrs. Lambert. Why you alarm me: I will warn them, sir.

Lambert. What were you saying, Vicar?

Broughton. [*Pointing to the newspaper.*] This account,

Upon the eve of opening our new bridge,
Has roused the City Fathers from their sleep,
And made them hungry with desire to learn
Who Dunhelmus Bristolensis is.

Lambert. Who can he be?

Broughton. Why, Thomas Chatterton.

Thistlethwaite. He took the manuscript from Redcliffe Church,

And sent a copy of it to the Journal,
As we can prove past doubt. He is my friend;
And had he stolen a book, a ring, a purse—
Committed private wrong, I would have held
My very breath, lest it should form a word
Of guidance for suspicion; but to steal
The sacred relics of the hallowed truth—
Our rich bequeathment from the ages past,
The birthright of the future, is a crime
My love for history can not connive.

Mrs. Lambert. Arrest him at the office, not the house.

Broughton. At neither place, if he return the parchments.

Lambert. He shall not 'scape a flogging.

Broughton. Be not rash :

Send for his mother and appeal to her ;

For he is tempered like a sword of fire.

Meanwhile, friend Thistlethwaite and I will go

To Redcliffe Church and search the coffers there.

Come, Thistlethwaite.

Lambert. I'll show you to the door.

Mrs. Lambert. And I will get those loving girls some cider.

[Mrs. Lambert goes into the parlour, and the others go out by the main entrance. Then the girls, who have been peeping into the hall, enter from the garden, leaving the casement open.]

Dorothy. Where can he be ?

Alice. He was not at the window.

Betty. I saw him come to dinner.

Agnes. *[In a whisper.]* There he is.

Enter CHATTERTON who comes slowly down the staircase.

Alice. What is the matter, poet ?

Chatterton. *[Looking up.]* Ah, my dears !

Alice. Your cheeks are very pale.

Chatterton. Bleached by the moon,
Which steals the pigment from the poet's face
And lends it to his verse.

Betty. What pretty words !

Chatterton. I saw you in the garden, and have
brought
An answer to your ode.

Dorothy. Is our ode good ?

Chatterton. Each line's a cripple with a perfect soul.
I fear the Muse, too envious of your beauty,
Refused to grant you aid. Here's my reply ;
'Tis called 'The Constant Lover,' and is worth
A hundred kisses.

Betty. We will buy it then.

Chatterton. [*Reads.*]

Lady dearest, why tax me
With the sin inconstancy ?
That I ever am in love
Your laments, fair lady, prove.
Giving you o'erflowing measure,
Still is left such boundless treasure,
Ever have I love to spare
For a damsel debonair.

Alice. Call you this constancy ?

Chatterton. I do forsooth :
Not to Love's object, but to Love, my dear.
[*Reads.*]

Were I cold to beauty's grace,
Slight I might your matchless face :
It is only by compare
Lovers learn to rate the rare.
'Tis by use we make life longer
And the tender passion stronger ;
So I dally with a score
That I may adore you more.

Alice. Indeed !

Chatterton. Emotions thrive by exercise.
[*Reads.*]

Life is love and death is hating ;
Loving one is selfish mating ;
Lovers' vows are ropes of snow
Melting in an amorous glow :
Bind my nature as I will,
Cupid is its master still.
Lady mine, then cease lamenting,
For my future's past repenting.

Alice. Is it for me ?

Dorothy. For me ?

Agnes. For me ?

Betty. For me ?

Chatterton. There's Solomon upon the mantelpiece ;
Two women claim the child ; a soldier stands
With naked sword to cut the boy in two :
Which one of you will yield this baby whole ?

Alice. I will not yield !

Betty.

Nor I !

Agnes.

Nor I !

Dorothy.

Nor I !

Chatterton. [*After a pause in which he acts non-plussed.*]

Quarter the infant, Captain of the Guard !

[*Tears the manuscript into four parts.*]

All. No, no !

Chatterton. 'Tis just ; for all may read or none ;
And each one shares the offspring of my brain
As each divides my heart.

[*Throws the pieces fluttering among them.*]

Enter MRS. LAMBERT from the parlour.

Mrs. Lambert.

My innocents !

What are you picking up ?

Chatterton.

Mere wanton words

That scratch their names upon the tomb of Time.

Mrs. Lambert. That's meaningless and surely means
a poem.

And here's another found upon your desk.

There is your stuff ! [*Tears up a paper and throws the pieces in his face.*] Come, girls, into the parlour.

[*Exeunt all except Chatterton, who stands motionless till they are gone.*]

Chatterton. Whom has the vandal slaughtered ? [*Examines the bits of paper on the floor and reads*]

‘Elegy.’

Knowing my wealth of thought, I spend too freely :
I’ll gather the remains.

Enter BERTHA.

Bertha. ’Tis well you’re here.

Chatterton. ’Tis well’s superlative repeated thrice !
Your visitation makes this bed of pain
Lie soft as downy eider’s nest.

Bertha. No more :
Our bond is Rowley—do not sever it.

The Catcotts, Broughton, Barrett, and my father
Are now upon the steps in earnest speech
About an article that has appeared—

Chatterton. The passing of the bridge ?

Bertha. Yes, that is it ;
And threats of process and arrest are made
Against you, sir, unless you make return.

Chatterton. And you would warn me ?

Bertha. Yes.

Chatterton. May they be blessed
For giving you occasion.—Not a scrap
Of priceless parchment shall they wrest from me.

Bertha. Be wary, sir ; for they are very wroth.

Chatterton. No boyish muscles ply within these arms ;
And with those magic darts of gold and lead
That quicken love and hatred, I defy
Jove's thunderbolts in livid lightning forged ;
Much more these harpies. I am full of fight !

Bertha. Be not incensed.

Chatterton. 'Twas but a tidal wave
Of briny anger roaring through my veins
Like Severn's eagle. [*Voices heard from without.*]
I will wait them here.

Bertha. I do beseech you, go !

Chatterton. Rome was well sold
By Antony.—I shall obey you, lady.

[*Chatterton goes up the staircase and Bertha sits
down by the fireplace as Burgum and George Cat-
cott enter followed by Lambert, Barrett, and Alex-
ander Catcott.*]

Burgum. No, Catcott, no : my aidance I refuse.
First let me get my Pedigree complete,
With every poem of my songful sires,
Then hale the boy to gaol.

Barrett. Your Pedigree?
Of more concern are parchments he withholds :
'Turgo's Account of Bristol,' 'England's Glory,'
'The Ancient Form of Monies,' views unique
Of castles, churches, chapels, Saxon gates—
All vital to my book.

Alexander Catcott. And what are these,
Friend Barrett, to the things he may have found
That prove the Noachian Deluge? for the works
Of Ovid, Lucian, Plutarch, and Berosus,
Though heathen writings, testify the flood
O'er this terraqueous globe.

Bertha. And bear in mind
That harshness may blot Rowley from the roll.

Barrett. That's very true ; for I have heard him say
That he had poems worth their weight in gold
The world must beg or lose ; and as he spoke
His eyes struck fire, and kindled, and blazed up
Most wonderful !

Lambert. How shall we tame the whelp?

Alexander Catcott. Let us consider : can you prove
the theft ?

Lambert. Past doubt.

Alexander Catcott. By whom?

Lambert. By Thistlethwaite.

George Catcott. The youth
That in The Gloucester Journal did recount
My climbing Nicholas' spire? He would not lie.
Barrett. He wrote my life.
George Catcott. And mine.
Lambert. And mine.
Alexander Catcott. And mine.
Burgum. And also mine: he has discrimination.
Lambert. And wit and eloquence; for he declaims
On every topic from the birth of light
To doomsday darkness.
George Catcott. And he does it well:
His words flow out like oil.
Bertha. And oil-like float
Upon the surface of each theme: he is
Too flaunting of his learning to be learned.
Burgum. Hush, daughter, hush!
Alexander Catcott. Nay, now I do recall
No Greek is taught within the Colston School,
Which Thistlethwaite attended; yet, forsooth,
He rants about Euripides, nor knows
That Beta follows Alpha in the list.
George Catcott. His sensitive corn—the Greek!
Bertha. Euripides,
Tradition says, was killed by a pack of hounds.

Alexander Catcott. What are we to infer?

Bertha. The hounds fed high.

Burgum. Another word, and I will send you home.

Bertha. You gag and blindfold Justice in your court,
And then pronounce a sentence in her name.

Alexander Catcott. [*Restraining Burgum with a gesture.*]

You shall be heard : speak fair solicitor.

Bertha. [*Rising in the red glow of the fire as Chatterton, with breast heaving and eyes dilating, appears in the gallery above.*]

My father will bear witness that till now
I lacked the froward spirit to o'erstep
A maidenly reserve ; but truth at times
Is carried by a single trembling string
That knows not why it vibrates : hear me, then,
As one o'ershadowed by a holy cause ;
For, by my mother's memory, I speak truth.

Alexander Catcott. They all shall listen or be in contempt.

Bertha. What is the accusation?—that a youth,
With swift discernment where you all were lag,
Has taken parchments from abandoned chests
And saved them to the world.

Alexander Catcott.

But theft is theft.

Bertha. Between the upright letters of your words
I see a monster glaring : what you brand
Is that he robbed you of the homage due
The bold explorer of a buried age,
Who brings its art and learning to the light—
Adding a page to knowledge : yea, restores
What Time has smuggled ; and you call him thief !

Lambert. He keeps the originals unlawfully :
'Tis larceny as bailee.

Bertha. Because you chill
A nature warm as are the springs of Bath
Bubbling from Roman ruins ; lave in it,
And sluice it through base channels till it 'scapes
Adown the Avon to the lustral sea.
And who is his accuser ?—one that shows
Too eager to wreak justice to be just :
Himself a thief.

Lambert. Such words are slanderous !

Bertha. Then you wrought wilful slander. Yester
night,
Within the muniment room of Redcliffe Church,
The glib and slippery Thistlethwaite was caught
Rifling the sacred coffers.

Lambert. Your witness, girl !

Bertha. One who was there—myself.

Burgum. [*Starting up.*] How came you there?

Bertha. I am not now on trial: 'tis enough
That what I vouch is true.

Barrett. May be he sought

To save them for the Vestry.

Bertha. Give may-bes scope,
And whom can you convict?—not Chatterton.
Oh, how you rush from reason to reprieve
An oily rogue because he flatters you :
Loves Barrett's history and Lambert's law,
The Vicar's corals, sea-shells, bones, and teeth,
That tell the Mosaic story of the flood ;
Notes each adventure of his brother George ;
And writes your lives with scarce a censor-word
To give laudation credence. Are you blind ?
You seek the earthly paradise of fame,
Where deeds immortal chant the doer's praise,
And fly your only guide—the one that raised
Old Rowley from the grave. He does not time
The quick pulsation of his fevered words,
For worth is haughty when it is disprized ;
And he is young—so young that I can plead
As if he were my brother. You may change
His golden locks to snakes, his teeth to tusks,
His glorious eyes to blood-shot orbs of pain,

And make death welcome ; but beware his scorn,
For it hath power to turn you into stone,
The mock of ages !—I can say no more.

*[Bursts into tears and hurries through the casement
into the garden as Chatterton, trembling with emotion,
disappears from the gallery.]*

Alexander Catcott. Her flail threshed out some corn.

Burgum.

By God, 'twas great !

Into the horse-pond went the Vicar first,
Like some old toper toppling from the ark ;
Next came the lawyer sprawling in the mud ;
And then the surgeon and the pewterer
With those of lesser trades ; and all emerged
Like cattle I have seen on rainy days
Tied to St. Thomas' Church. *[Laughs uproariously and
flourishes his Pedigree.]* It was the blood

Of John de Bergham speaking on her tongue
From out the silent past. Had I but known
Such eloquence was mine by right of birth,
I would have stood in Parliament ere this
And been the mouth of England.

Lambert. *[Sarcastically.]* Have a care,
Friend Burgum, lest your grandchild find,
Amid the knightly charges on his shield,
An inkhorn and a goose-quill.



STEEP ST.

Mary Redcliffe.

[ACT II.]

Barrett. And enscrolled,
In scrivener's script, 'Write on !'

Burgum. Write on ? write what ?
My motto, sir, is ' Ride on.'

Barrett. Best dismount ;
For you are at the top of Steep Street now,
And your high barb may stumble.

Burgum. Is that sense ?

Lambert. To echo John de Bergham, are you blind ?

Burgum. You both are riddlers.

Alexander Catcott. I will be more clear.
If these old ears have not forgot a voice
That trembled in their portals years ago,
There spake upon the lady's silvery tongue
A nobler spirit than your Norman sire—
Divinely-fathered Love.

Burgum. [*In anger.*] She loves him not !
I have it from her lips.

Alexander Catcott. I've heard it said
Love laughs at lovers' lies, as well as locks,
And angels ne'er record them.

Burgum. It is false !

Lambert. Yet from her tale we might infer a tryst
Within the muniment room ; perhaps to plan
Continuance of your line.

Burgum.

I say 'tis false !

She is contract to Rowley, that damned monk
Who wrote erotic verse.

Alexander Catcott.

More cause for fear :

When Cupid and Calliope are leagued,
A maiden's heart needs more than Bristowe's wall
To check the Cavaliers.

George Catcott.

She praised his eyes.

Alexander Catcott. Ah, so she did ; and that's de-
notement sure

That they have darted wildfire through her own
Upon her bosom's keep, and tinted flames
The blissful tears of budding maidenhood
Can not extinguish.

Burgum.

Damn his eyes and yours !

She loves him not ! I say she loves him not !

Alexander Catcott. But women learn to love what
they protect :

'Tis childless motherhood.

Burgum. [*Walking up and down in a rage.*]

She loves him not !

Lambert. Has John de Bergham aged to iterance ?

Burgum. [*Pausing and shaking his finger at Lam-
bert.*]

By heaven ! I'd see you and your prentice burnt,

Like Sharp and Hales, upon St. Michael's Hill,
Ere blood of his should mingle with my own.

Barrett. Does not your Pedigree proclaim him heir
To Radcliff de Chatterton of Chatterton? [*They laugh.*

Alexander Catcott. Enough of this bear-baiting.

Burgum. [*With a forced laugh.*] Aptly put :
Old Bruin worried by some mongrel dogs !

Enter FOOTBOY.

Lambert. Well ?

Footboy. Mr. Horace Walpole—

Lambert. [*In amazement.*] Horace what ?

Footboy. He says his name is Walpole. [*Yawns.*

Lambert. Are you sure?—

You drowsy dolt, you are not half awake.

Footboy. I must sleep day-time, sir, or never sleep ;
For Thomas writes all night.

Lambert. Well, show him in. [*Exit Footboy.*
The son of England's former Minister
Seeks legal counsel.

Alexander Catcott. Or my fossils, sir.

Barrett. I sent him a prospectus of my book ;
But we shall learn what magnet draws him here.

Burgum. [*Waving his Pedigree.*]
Perhaps I hold the magnet in my hand.

Enter FOOTBOY followed by HORACE WALPOLE.

Lambert. [*Rising and going to him.*]

Welcome to Bristol, most distinguished sir !

Walpole. This, then, is Mr.—

Lambert.

Lambert.

Walpole. [*Puzzled.*]

Lambert?—yes.

Lambert. Let me present to you my worthy friends :

The Reverend Alexander Catcott, sir,

Vicar of Temple Church and author of

A Treatise on the Deluge ; William Barrett,

The surgeon and historian of Bristol ;

George Catcott, who ascended Nicholas' steeple

And left his name beneath the topmost stone ;

And Henry Burgum, sir, whose Pedigree—

Burgum. Whose Pedigree runs parallel with yours ;

For both the founders of our families, sir,

Came over with the Duke of Normandy.

Walpole. England owes much and many to his
Grace.

Burgum. I'll call my daughter in.

[*Hurries into the garden.*]

Walpole.

I came from Bath

This morning in the coach.

Lambert.

Sit near the fire :

The day is chilly, and you are fatigued.

Walpole. I am not, sir, épuisé with the jaunt

Mary Redcliffe.

[ACT II.]

From Bath to Bristol, for the air was bracing ;
But my eyes are Ghebers in their love for flames.—
You know, I fancy, why I trespass here.

Lambert. [*With assurance.*] Entanglement in law ?

Walpole. Lord bless you, no !

Alexander Catcott. Were it not too presumptuous, I
might ask

Whether your journey, honoured sir, is due
To interest in the Deluge ?

Walpole. Deluge, sir ?

I drink iced water—there my interest ends.

Barrett. [*With an air of confidence.*]

It is more likely, Vicar, that a wit,
A man of letters, patron of the arts—

Walpole. I beg your pardon : I am none of these.

Enter BURGUM and BERTHA.

Burgum. My daughter, Mr. Walpole—Horace Wal-
pole.

Walpole. [*Looking with evident admiration and then
bowing.*]

The fashion is too formal to express
My pleasure at this meeting.

Bertha. Thank you, sir.

Burgum. Is she not truly Norman ?

Bertha. [*Embarrassed.*] Father, please.

Walpole. Her gentle breeding shows in delicate veins,
Like azure current branching through the snow.

Lambert. [*With slight irritation.*]

We are agog to serve you, Mr. Walpole.

Walpole. My mission had quite faded in the light
Of sudden fortune: I am like a man
Who, stooping for a stone to hurl in sport,
Finds in his path a cloud-begotten pearl.

[*Makes a bow to Bertha, which Chatterton observes
as, hat in hand, he comes down the staircase.*]

Burgum. A second John De Bergham in the flesh!

Walpole. A curious manuscript was sent to me
By some old antiquary—Chatterton.

All. Chatterton!

[*Chatterton stops as his name is pronounced and
leans on a newel head.*]

Walpole. [*To Lambert.*] A relative of yours, perhaps.

Lambert. A relative?—my bound apprentice, sir;
And there he stands. [*All turn and look at Chatterton.*]

Walpole. [*Rising.*] That boy?—you surely jest.

Chatterton. [*Coming down.*]

What matter that I am not free and old?

The purest pearl upon Spain's tawny breast

Was found by a negro child.

Walpole. [*Haughtily.*] I must refuse—

Bertha. Will you not listen?

Walpole. [*Bowing graciously.*] If you so request.

Chatterton. You prate of pearls; I have the flawless
stones

That flamed upon the breast-plate of a priest :
A sardius glowing like the setting sun,
Firing the soul and banishing all fear ;
A topaz from the alabaster mines
Of Jove's great city, quickening every sense ;
A Burmah ruby ripened in the earth,
Clouding its lustre at approach of ill,
And gleaming crimson in the murkiest night ;
An Emerald flashing like the lightning's play
Among green olive trees ; a sapphire star ;
A Brahmin-diamond lucid as the dew,
Refulgent as the rays of orient sun,
And cool as evening tempered by the moon ;
A ligure brilliant as the eye of lynx ;
An agate, like the memory, holding aye
The imaged beauty of a woodland scene ;
An amethyst that quells the god of wine ;
A beryl from Egyptian mummy-pit,
Wearing the verdant livery of the sea ;
An onyx from the finger-tip of Love ;
And last a jasper with these dazzling gems ;

Each catching fire and colour from the rest ;
All ranged by fiat in four tribal rows,
And set in gold in their enclosings, sir. —
Contest another figure, if you please.

Walpole. A span of tinsel—not a word of sense !

Chatterton. I borrowed words from Exodus.

Walpole.

They began

‘ All ranged by fiat—’

Chatterton.

No, those words were mine.

Shall I close up my casket and depart,
Or will you view one jewel ?

Bertha. [*Eagerly.*]

Show him one.

Chatterton. [*Taking a manuscript from his pocket.*]

This is the Ode to Freedom Rowley wrote ;

’Tis from his Tragedy of ‘ Godwin,’ sir.

[*Reads.*]

When Freedom, drest in blood-stained vest,
To every knight her war-song sung,
Upon her head wild weeds were spread,
A gory anlace by her hung.
She dancèd on the heath ;
She heard the voice of Death.

Bertha. [*To Walpole.*] Is that not masterful ?

Walpole.

No modern bard—

Not even Gray—could paint so weird a picture.

Burgum. You must read Bergham's 'The Romance of the Knight.'

Alexander Catcott. 'Tis like a ballad-dance in ancient Greece,

Where motion, words, and music blend like flames.

Chatterton. [*Reading with a strange smile.*]

Pale-eyed Affright, his heart of silver hue,
In vain assailed her bosom to acale—

Walpole. Acale? I do not know the word.

Chatterton. [*Rebukingly.*] To chill!

Burgum. De Bergham wrote much harder words than that.

Chatterton. [*Continuing his reading.*]

Pale-eyed Affright, his heart of silver hue,
In vain assailed her bosom to acale;
She heard onflemed the shrieking voice of Woe
And sadness in the owlet shake the dale.
She shook her burlèd spear,
On high she jeste her shield;
Her foemen all appear,
And flizz along the field.

Walpole. 'Tis well sustained.

Bertha. And will be to the close.

Chatterton. [*Reading with increased force.*]

Power with his heafod straught into the skies,
His spear a sunbeam and his shield a star,
Alike twa brendyng gronfyres rolls his eyes,
Chafes with his iron feet and sounds to war.
She sits upon a rock,
She bends before his spear,
She rises from the shock
Wielding her own in air !

Walpole. The bard has reached his pitch and he must
stoop !

Bertha. He will not stoop—he'll stop ere he will
stoop !

Chatterton. [*Almost in a frenzy.*]

Hard as the thunder doth she drive it on ;
Wit skilly wimpled guides it to his crown ;
His long sharp spear, his spreading shield is gone ;
He falls, and falling rolleth thousands down.
War, gore-faced War, by Envy burled arist,
His fiery helm ynodding to the air,
Ten bloody arrows in his straining fist—

Walpole. Magnificent ! Read on !

Alexander Catcott. Read on !

Bertha. Read on !

Chatterton. I've read it all: the line o'erwhelmed
his fancy.

Walpole. You well may call it jewel; for it glows
Like moon new-risen on a battlefield.

Chatterton. Or like the blood-red ruby Harry wore
Upon his crest at Agincourt.

Walpole. Enough!

Chatterton. Rub it with ruby tried; and if it break,
It is a garnet coloured like a bull
And set with copper foil.

Bertha. It will not break.

Barrett. 'The Battle of Hastings' is a livelier stone.

Bertha. That's Rowley's, too!

Walpole. This gem can not be matched.

Alexander Catcott. Save by the Greeks.

Burgum. And John de Bergham, sir.

Walpole. Why did you write to me?

Chatterton. Think not I seek
To fatten you for food with flattery.
You are a gentleman reputed wise,
And have a private press at Strawberry Hill:
If Rowley's poems please you, publish them;
If not, the Hotwells will repay your ride.

[*Laughter of girls heard from the parlour.*

Enter FOOTBOY excitedly.

Footboy. It is the Mayor—Thomas Harris, sir !

Lambert. What if it were the King, you Bedlamite ?

Enter the MAYOR.

Mayor. I am informal, for I am in haste :
The Corporation dine me at The Bush,
And it is famous for its turtle soup.

Lambert. You can not come too soon or stay too long,
Most honoured sir.

Mayor. That's what the landlords say.

Footboy. [*After drawing attention by eyeing the Mayor admiringly.*] He looks like Stephens 'the nailer !'

Lambert. Out, you fool !

And do not show your face again this day.

[*Exit Footboy.*

Perhaps, dear sir, you came to meet my guest,
Who will be glad—

Mayor. I've met him or shall miss him ;
I must divulge my mission and away.

Lambert. If you have need of pilot in the law,
'The honour in your service is my fee.

Mayor. Do you know Thomas Chatterton ?

Lambert. [*In anger.*] Again !

Mayor. Bright said he thought he was your partner,
sir.

Lambert. He is my prentice, and is smiling there.

Mayor. [*To Lambert after staring at Chatterton.*]

The time for joking is at table, sir,
Where tippie wets dry wit: 'tis foul to ask
A sober man to laugh at silly sallies.

Lambert. No other Chatterton is known to me.

Mayor. [*Beckoning to Chatterton.*] Come here;
come here!

[*Chatterton looks up the staircase.*] What are you looking for?

Chatterton. Your poodle, sir.

Lambert. This insolence must cease.

Mayor. Do you write verse for Felix Farley's Journal?

Chatterton. Some vagrant lines.

Mayor. The penmanship's the same!—

Did you describe a grand procession formed
To celebrate the birth of Bristol's bridge?

Chatterton. I fathered it.

Mayor. Then you're the one I seek.

The Aldermen, the Councillors, and—Mayor,

In hasty convocation, have decreed

To open our new bridge the selfsame way.

Chatterton. Well, they have my assent.

Mayor. [*Taking out a newspaper.*] You saucy boy!
Do you know more than you have here set down?

Chatterton. Like creamy Cheddar, sir, I sell the curd
And keep the whey of thought.—A little more.

Mayor. Then meet me at my house to-morrow noon
In St. Augustine's back.

Chatterton. I shall be there.

Mayor. We must have trappings, minstrels, rod, and
all,

As in that bygone age : 'twill be sublime !—
And now for dinner with the turtle soup.

Enter BROUGHTON and THISTLETHWAITE.

Broughton. This is a timely meeting, Master Mayor :
We have discovered what will interest you
And many sitting here.

Mayor. You must be brief :
The tables groan, and I am tender-hearted.

[*Rubs his stomach.*]

Broughton. [*To Chatterton who turns scornfully away.*]
You must not go—you are the one accused.

Chatterton. [*Turning.*] Accused of what ?

Broughton. Of many things in one.

Chatterton. Heigh-ho, up we go ! we'll have a scene
in court.

Broughton. Now, Thistlethwaite, begin.

Thistlethwaite. It grieves me much
To expose a friend.

Chatterton. Observe the ugly mouth
Of that fellow with a lisp within his name.
Could anything as beautiful as Truth
Issue from such a pit?—Present your case.

Thistlethwaite. To prove wrong-doing is to anger
guilt;
But I am so reluctant in my duty,
That taunts bestir compassion. Facts will speak;
Nor shall they be enforced by word of mine.
I do affirm, and am prepared to prove,
That all of Thomas Rowley's works were writ
By Thomas Chatterton. [*General consternation.*]

Chatterton. [*Calmly.*] Produce your proof.

Thistlethwaite. [*After taking a piece of ochre, a
pounce-box, a bottle, and a parchment from a
satchel.*]

Here are the ochre, lead, and charcoal used
For forging those antiques in Redcliffe Church;
And here's 'A Song to Ælla' partly aged.—
What say you, Rowley, to this evidence?

Chatterton. You can not prove a calf leaped o'er a barn
By leading out the calf: show us the leap.

Thistlethwaite. [*Triumphantly turning to the others
who are talking and gesticulating wildly.*]
And what say you, my friends?

Barrett.

You are a fool !

Burgum. A lunatic at large !

George Catcott.

A drivelling dunce !

Walpole. A knave without the cunning to conceal

His native baldness with attorney's wig,

Who fain would foist a fairy tale on me.

Thistlethwaite. My motive, sir, was honest, be assured.

Walpole. Write Rowley's works?—absurd !

Burgum.

Preposterous !

Barrett. Write Rowley's works—write Chaucer's
tales !

Were he to swear it I should swear he lied.

'Twould prove my book a hoax—it would, by God !

Alexander Catcott. The boy has rarest genius ; mark
you that.

Barrett. He may have made the Burgum Pedigree.

Burgum. [*Jumping to his feet.*]

The Burgum Pedigree?—you quacking goose !

[*Then turning to Thistlethwaite.*]

And you—you braying colt of some wild ass !

Make of your skull a fishing-pot for eels.

The Heralds' College shall attest my birth.

Mayor. [*Holding up the newspaper as the situation
dawns on him*] Does he allege that Chatterton
wrote this ?

[*Barrett nods assent.*]

By currant dumplings and a bit of hash,
I'll clap him in the madhouse for his speech !

Lambert. Vicar, I marvel that yourself believed
In such a fable.

Broughton. I had not read the works.

[*Then to Chatterton.*]

What purpose did the lead and ochre serve ?

Chatterton. To overpaint the damning bloom of
youth :

To give my skin the parchment hue of age
And mark deep wrinkles, sir. If not for that,
Make your surmise : we are not now in France
Where the accused must work his own undoing.

Bertha. He may have used them to make copies, sir.

Burgum. That's true, my girl.

Walpole. 'Tis sure : a woman's wit
Has solved the puzzle.

Broughton. [*To Thistlethwaite.*] Make the graver
charge.

Thistlethwaite. [*Taking a manuscript from the satchel.*]
This document was found within a coffer.

Broughton. [*To Chatterton who smiles.*]
You deem it droll ; but 'tis as libellous
As Number Forty-five that gaoled John Wilkes.

[*Enter from the parlour MRS. LAMBERT and the girls laughing. Lambert motions to them not to interrupt the reading.*

Thistlethwaite. [*Reads.*]

This is the latest Will and Testament
Of Thomas Chatterton whose life is spent.

Lambert. What can a pauper leave?

Chatterton.

His body, sir.

Thistlethwaite. [*Reading.*]

Written in great distress, but not in fear,
This fourteenth day of April, the tenth year
Of George the Third, our wooden-headed king,
Who to the bagpipes foots the Highland Fling.

Barrett. Treason!

George Catcott. Were this disclosed, he would be
hanged!

Thistlethwaite. [*Reading.*]

To Thomas Broughton I bequeath my eyes,
That see the figured truth in literal lies—
Damned narrow notions tending to disgrace
The boasted reason of the human race.

[*All except Broughton laugh.*

Broughton. Profane and blasphemous!

Alexander Catcott. [*Smiling.*] Not that, if true.
Thistlethwaite. [*Reading.*]

To Vicar Catcott, all my bones and blood,
 To fill his cabinet and to swell his flood ;
 And to his cat-like brother, my toe-nails,
 That he may climb until his courage fails.

[*All except the Catcotts and Broughton laugh.*
Alexander Catcott. 'Tis sinful to scoff the Deluge.
George Catcott. Or my climb.
Thistlethwaite. [*Reading.*]

To William Barrett I bequeath my brain—
 The primal part of it when split in twain—
 That he on printing may not waste his cash ;
 For, save what Rowley wrote, his book is trash.

[*All except Barrett, the Catcotts, and Broughton laugh.*
Barrett. The snarling cur ! to call my history trash,
 And flatter Rowley. Curse his impudence !
Thistlethwaite. [*Reading.*]

To harsh John Lambert I assign my liver,
 To cleanse the bilious blood that wronged the giver.

Lambert. A viper I have warmed upon my breast !
Thistlethwaite. [*Reading.*]

To Thistlethwaite I leave my candid tongue,
Which sings unwisely, but has never sung
A whining psalm to sanctify my hate,
Or petty pæan pandering to the great.

I pardon him those most unchristian lines.

Mayor. This is most humourous, but my dinner waits.

Broughton. Be patient ; it will take a serious turn.

Thistlethwaite. [*Reading.*]

To our fat Mayor, who fain would be a knight,
I leave my stomach and my appetite ;
And when he snores in church, like hog o'erfed,
I bid the sacrist smite him on the head.

[*All except those satirised laugh ; Burgum laughing
more loudly than any.*]

Mayor. [*Sputtering with indignation.*]

Smite me upon the head, you parish brat !

And do you think I would accept from you

That thimble-belly in exchange for this ?

[*Slaps his paunch proudly and turns angrily to Broughton.*]

Is it for this you kept me from the table ?

By turtles' ghosts !—

Broughton.

The end is very near.

Thistlethwaite. [*Reading.*]

To Henry Burgum I bequeath my scorn
Of ignoble men that are most nobly born,
My Latin, modesty, and ancient name,
To snatch his blustering ignorance from shame.

Burgum. [*Waving his cane and starting toward Chatterton.*]

My blustering ignorance! I'll cudgel you!

Bertha. [*Running to her father and restraining him.*]

Father! father! 'tis but a boyish fling;
Be not so foolish, or you'll prove it just.

Burgum. [*Returning to his chair.*]

An upstart to a man of quality!

Thistlethwaite. [*Reading.*]

To dear Tom Phillips I entrust my heart,
Ere to the land of shadows I depart,
That he may have this motto graved thereon—
Brief as my life—'Alas, poor Chatterton!'

Mayor. [*While the others fume with rage.*]

'Tis treason to His Majesty, the King!

Lambert. And libel on us all!

Barrett.

What shall be done?

Burgum. Monstrous!

Broughton.

Take him before a magistrate.

Enter MRS. CHATTERTON.

Mrs. Chatterton. Dear Mr. Lambert, did you send for me?—

O Thomas! what is this?

Chatterton. 'Tis nothing, mother:

A potent star, lord of the house of wealth,
Forbade a prison cell.

Mrs. Chatterton. [*Wildly.*] A prison cell?

Lambert. Madam, your son has grossly libelled us;
And we propose to punish him by law.

Mrs. Chatterton. You are not guilty, Thomas?

Chatterton. Mother, no.

Lambert. A judge and jury shall determine that.

Mrs. Chatterton. Oh, do not drag him, sir, before a court!

Bertha. Be merciful!

Barrett. He does not merit mercy.

Alexander Catcott. That is not true.

Broughton. Be firm.

Lambert. I will not swerve.

Mrs. Chatterton. O Mr. Lambert, it would kill my son!

Upon my knees—

Chatterton. [*Restraining her.*] No, mother, not to him.

There is no mercy Mary Redcliffe holds

Could make me kneel to man ; and I would kneel
Ere you should, mother.

Lambert. Now, lest he decamp,
I must place him in proper custody.

*[Rises to make the arrest, and Chatterton, pulling
back the ruffles from his wrists, prepares for a
struggle, while his mother clings to him in terror.]*

Mrs. Chatterton. O Thomas ! Thomas !—Mr. Lam-
bert, mercy !

Bertha. Hear what he has to say in his defence !

Walpole. I must uphold the lady.

Alexander Catcott. Let him answer.

Chatterton. *[Stepping forward and standing free.]*

The Will is mine : 'twas filched from Mary Redcliffe.

I wrote the thing in sport for my own eyes,

To please my humour and to ease my mind ;

And when the fit of satire is upon me,

I spare nor friend nor foe.—Our thoughts are free,

Our pens are free in secret to record them.

'Twas harmless as a tigress in her lair

Suckling her playful cubs ; if not so now,

Let your full censure fall upon the one

Who forced it from its natural retreat.—

It is not libellous ; but suppose it were :

The crime is publishing, not writing it

With no intent to print—and he's the libeller.
We are on English soil, my merry men,
And that is English law !

Broughton. [*To Lambert.*] Is that the law ?

Lambert. It is the law ; for now I do recall
'Tis held that publication must be shown,
Or prosecution falls. [*Takes a paper from the table-
drawer and goes to the fireplace.*] But I will burn
The Indenture of Apprenticeship made void
By his misconduct and his obdurate heart !

[*Lights the paper and holds it up flaming.*]

Chatterton. My bonds are burning. [*Then smiling
sweetly as the ashes fall.*] They are all consumed.—
Dear mother, let us go away together.

[*Puts his arm round his mother, and they go out of
the archway as the curtain descends.*]



ACT THIRD.

SCENE.—*A Street in Redcliffe, Bristol. At the left is the North Porch of St. Mary Redcliffe, with steps leading to the entrance; at the right is the Old Fox Inn, with a table and chairs near the doorway. At the back centre is Redcliffe Gate, through which are seen quaint, gabled houses. On the rise of the curtain, Chatterton is discovered writing at the table before the inn. As the organ sounds and the people begin to come from the church, he throws down the quill, folds the manuscript, and puts it into his pocket. Then Betty, Agnes, Dorothy, and Alice enter from the porch.*

Alice. There is our constant lover!

Chatterton. [*Rising and bowing.*] Ever yours.

Alice. A husband's letter; for a lover's note

Closes with 'love and kisses.'

Betty.

Try again.

Chatterton. Hail nymphs as radiant as the irised
spray

Skirting the salt-sea breakers!

Alice. That is better.

Agnes. You naughty poet, you were not at service.

Chatterton. A sermon preached to sanctify a sport
Smacks of a barbarous age.

Agnes. What sport?

Dorothy. What sport?

Chatterton. The sport to-day—the opening of the
bridge.

Alice. Why do you call it sport?—The Vicar said
It will be a touching and a solemn sight.

Chatterton. And so it will; but Chaucer's shade will
smile

When Bristol rouses to her cats and dogs
To ape a pristine pageant.

Alice. For this pomp,
You have neglected us.

Chatterton. Nay, for two weeks
I have been tricking out the burghers, dear,
With garments such as the Brystowans wore
When christening their new bridge at Eastertide.
I'll make the richest progress of Queen Bess
Appear a march of rags.—Wait till you see
George Catcott in a goat's skin and the Mayor
Astride a white horse dight with sable trappings,
Waving a golden rod.

Mary Redcliffe.

[ACT III.]

Betty. Won't he look grand !

Alice. Would you had never found that parchment,
Tom ;

For it has robbed us of a dozen songs.

Agnes. I wish so, too.

Dorothy. And so do I.

Betty. And I.

Chatterton. I still am young.

Alice. What were you writing there ?

Chatterton. A farewell ode to Mary Redcliffe, Alice ;
I leave to-day for London.

All. Oh !

Alice. You jest !

Enter LAMBERT and his MOTHER from the church.

Chatterton. 'Tis true : the coach this afternoon will
take

Your songster in its basket.

Betty. I shall weep !

Dorothy. I know I shall.

Agnes. Alice is weeping now !

Chatterton. Heaven bless you all ; for you have been
to me

What glades in forests are.

Mrs. Lambert. O John, look there !—

Come here, my dears ; you do not know that boy.

Lambert. He barely 'scaped a prison.

Chatterton.

Sir, you lie.

Lambert. [*Raising his stick.*]

Withdraw those words, or I will strike you down !

Mrs. Lambert. Be careful, John !

Alice.

O Mr. Lambert—no !

Chatterton. But touch me, sir, to make the battery
yours,

And I will seize you by that throat of clay

And choke you till your venom'd tongue will crawl

Like an adder from its hole.

Mrs. Lambert.

Come, John ; come, girls ;

For I see Murder glittering in his eyes.

Lambert. Your end will be the gallows.

Chatterton.

Best pass on.

Mrs. Lambert. Did you ere see a more ungrateful
wretch ?

[*Excunt Mrs. Lambert, Lambert, and the girls.*]

Chatterton. Footpads infest the cross-roads of my life ;

And I must fight them even in my sleep.

Enter from the porch PHILLIPS, MRS. CHATTERTON,
and MARY.

Mrs. Chatterton. There's Thomas waiting for us.

Chatterton. [*Going to her.*]

My own mother,

You make me feel abashed.

Mary. I know the why :
We left Miss Burgum with your Uncle Richard ;
I think they went up to the muniment room.

Mrs. Chatterton. I am not jealous, Thomas, yet at times
I feel so home-sick for the little boy
That had no word but mother on his lips,
And could not walk without me.

Chatterton. [*Putting his arm round her.*] Mother,
dear,
I can not walk without you now. Each twinge of pain,
Flitting across your features, gives to me
A tremor of alarm ; each print of care
Leaves impress of remorse ;—why, every cloud
That hovers o'er your face dusks all my joy ;
And I watch you more closely than you dream.—
Alas ! there is a shadow on your brow.

Mrs. Chatterton. It is the thought of parting with
you, Tom.

Chatterton. Cold Saturn glared from the ascendant,
mother,
When this brave question in my mind was born ;
But bid me stay, and I will fight in Bristol.

Mrs. Chatterton. You are a good son, say they what
they may.

Chatterton. Tell mother, Phillips, it is for the best.
God knows that fame is not so dear to me
As the one that gave me birth.

Phillips. 'Tis for the best :
'Twill give him tribes and tribute for his work ;
And I will stake my life upon its worth.

Chatterton. Oh, I could fall down here upon my
knees,
Heap ashes on my head, and sackcloth wear
For my ingratitude in cursing Fate !—
Three beings on this earth, and each one mine
Through glory or dishonour to the grave ;
No need of reason—not a doubt to kill !

Mrs. Chatterton. You must write often, Thomas.

Chatterton. Every coach
Shall be a herald of my triumph, mother.
And when the stars allow me to unfrock
And own the lovely children of my brain,
You shall not teach or stitch a tick of time ;
Mary shall realise her dreams of dress ;
And Phillips shall not waste his precious prime
On the witless urchins of the Colston School.
We'll have a place beside the gliding Thames,
As calm and peaceful as the downy swans
Floating reflected on its heaveless breast—

A cottage covered o'er with ivy vines,
Lilacs and woodbines and a hawthorn hedge,
Huge oaks that root in ages overgrown,
And our own sweep of sward.

Phillips. 'Tis likely, Tom ;

But be not sickened by a hope deferred.

Chatterton. What hidden meaning does your tone betray ?

Phillips. I fear that ere the world gives Rowley's songs

The fervent praise it can not well unsay,
You must tell Walpole Rowley is a myth.

Chatterton. Why must I, Phillips ?

Phillips. Burgum goes to London,

At Walpole's urgent counsel, to remove
The doubt cast on his Pedigree and Arms ;
And once the Heralds' College sees them, Tom,
Suspicious eyes will scan the Rowley works
And prove them to be yours.

Chatterton. When does he go ?

Phillips. The early part of August.

Chatterton. Four long months !

I'll be prepared before that distant day ;
Why, ere the coach rolls over Marlborough Downs,
A method will be sprouting in my mind.

Mrs. Chatterton. What method, Tom ?

Chatterton. The method of unhooding.
Four months is long enough with time to spare
For Rowley's fame, were not a verse composed.

Phillips. The Bard of Avon scarce could work so
fast.

Chatterton. There are two Bards of Avon, Will and
Tom,
And each one has his river.—Happy thought !
I have the method : I will write a play,
In which a youth shall follow in my course ;
Have Garrick act it when old Walpole's present ;
And doff my cowl with grace.

Mary. Why use a play ?

Chatterton. Walpole is prejudiced, capricious, vain,
But sensitive withal ; and a device
So old and delicate will please his taste ;
O'ercream the prickle of his nettled pride ;
And, deftly done, may lift me up so high
That the step to Rowley will appear so slight,
His gouty foot will mount it without pause.
And more than this—there is Miss Burgum now !

Mary. She is taking leave of uncle in the porch.

Mrs. Chatterton. Come, Mr. Phillips ; we are in the
way.

Chatterton. Forgive me, mother ; I'll be at the house
Ere the procession starts.

Mary. I send a kiss.

Mrs. Chatterton. Be silent, Mary.—Thomas, bear in
mind

That Chatterton's a nobler name than Burgum.

Chatterton. My love is humble but not grovelling,
mother.

[*Exeunt Mrs. Chatterton, Mary, and Phillips as
Bertha comes slowly down the steps.*]

Bertha. Why, Mr. Chatterton !

Chatterton. Are you surprised ?

Bertha. I have not seen you since the day—the day—

Chatterton. You were so eloquent in my defence.

Bertha. You were eavesdropping, then.

Chatterton. Call it not that.

Some words, the Cabala says, have power occult

No spirit can resist ; 'twas so with me.

Their curses seemed like bats upon the wing ;

Your accents like the flight of finches, lady,

Followed by Fancy, with her mistless eyes,

Beyond the range of sight, and memoried then

For future dreams.

Bertha. What have you done these days
Since you left Lambert's house ?

Chatterton.

Not overmuch :

Re-read Agrippa, part of Paracelsus,
And ' The Economy of Human Life '
Translated from a Bramin's Indian tongue ;
Designed the costumes for this mummers' march ;
Sketched a few castles and some Roman camps ;
Wandered at times o'er the surrounding hills—
There are expansive views from Drundry Tower
O'er seven counties of this peerless Isle ;
One over Clifton and the Severn's tide
To the Wyndcliff rising from the tortuous Wye
Near Tintern Abbey.

Bertha.

Have you written nothing ?

Chatterton. A few poor songs : I wrote an elegy
At Stanton-Drew—a joyless lover's wail,
Amid the altars of enduring stone,
Where Druid-priest once drove his golden knife
Into the victim's heart.

Bertha.

What have you found ?

Chatterton. An ancient song near Norton-Malreward,
The place of Rowley's birth.

Bertha.

A name prophetic.

Oh, let me see the song !

Chatterton.

It is not here.

Bertha. What is the title ?—tell me of it, please.

Chatterton. A name prophetic, too—‘The Unknown Knight.’

Bertha. May I not read it soon?

Chatterton. To-morrow evening

I shall be passing through Threadneedle Street
To Shoreditch, London.

Bertha. When do you return?

Chatterton. When Rowley’s famous and myself am
known—

When I stir London with real flesh and blood,
As I shall Bristol with this puppet-show :
To-day’s my climax here.

Bertha. That may take years.

Chatterton. Time minces through the wonderland of
youth :

My months are years.

Bertha. My prayers accompany you.

Chatterton. Then I shall win : I lift the glove of Fate !

Bertha. You must not be so wild.

Chatterton. [*Taking a bracelet from his pocket.*]

This bangle, lady,
Has pendants formed from early coins upturned
By my dear father in his tragic search
For what his present lacked ; for then as now,
The city walls, the Roman camps, the hills,

And the outlying castles were too weak
To check the Roundhead, Commerce.—Here we see
The sitting figure of a Latin dame
Holding a goblet to uncoiling serpent
Ascending from an altar ; on this medal,
Constantinus riding in a chariot drawn
By four wild steeds, ‘Soli invicto Comiti.’
Here is another maid, in her left hand
The horn of plenty, and within her right
The rudder of a ship.—The symbol’s clear.—
A man transfixing suppliant with a dart ;
The drawing of a captive from a den ;
Two hands clasped tightly in mild Nerva’s reign ;
And on this coin of silver is inscribed
The potent word, ‘Invictus !’—Take it, lady.

Bertha. A maiden, sir, can not accept—

Chatterton.

You must,

Or I will hurl the trinket to the street.
A gift refused revives the bitter slight
Whenever it is scanned.

Bertha. [*Taking it.*] Then give it me.—

I am very sorry you are going, sir.

Chatterton. Such sorrow is my joy !

Bertha.

You must be calm,

Or prudence will forbid me to remain.

Chatterton. Fools are uplifted by the wings of Love.
 You do not know how calm I meant to be ;
 How oft I have rehearsed this parting scene
 With every tranquil word I was to speak,
 And not a syllable is apt—not one.
 I love you—that is all.

Bertha. You are a boy,
 And youth is changeful as an April sky.

Chatterton. You call me boy ; I have an only son
 Three centuries old—his name is Thomas Rowley.

Bertha. You must forget this fondness in your work.

Chatterton. I've tried to weary love with ceaseless
 toil :

Why, I have scarcely slept since last we met ;
 No hour too late, and not a moment lost.
 Nor could I drown my love in beauty, lady :
 Each blackbird sang of wooing to its mate,
 Each primrose whispered of a bridal wreath,
 Each landscape spake of wedded years ahead.—
 Look on the carving of that purfled porch,
 And see a genius tangled in design :
 Love is the rock, the rest is filigree !

Bertha. You promised to be commonplace in day-
 light.

Chatterton. O, gentle lady, give me some response—

A word on whose foundation I can build.
Think what it is to be alone in London :
A million people and not one a friend ;
A maze of narrow streets with smoking lamps ;
Steep, creaking stairs, a garret, and a candle
That weeps and struggles feebly with the dark.
But to a lover loved, all this is changed :
A million fancies come as welcome friends,
The streets are highways leading on to fame,
The lamps are stars, the garret is a palace,
The tallow dip is Freedom's flaming torch,
And the swift river is the flux of power
Seeking communion with the mighty streams
That pour into the ocean.—Bertha, dear,
Let Love accompany me.

Bertha.

This is true love,

If it prove lasting.

Chatterton.

Put me to the proof.

Bertha. You must not deem me cold and heartless, sir ;
But were I yours, and were your love to wane,
My life would be undone.

Chatterton.

A test ! a test !

Bertha. Time is the only test, and we must wait ;
I, too, am young and vaguely know my heart ;
Though this your frankness forces me to own :

I love to hear your voice, and when you leave
I feel I shall be lonely.

Chatterton. Those few words
Will fill all London with the scent of roses
And flood the alleys with a gilding light !
In knightly spirit, lady, I accept
The trying test of time and seal the bond.

[*Sinks upon one knee and kisses her hand.*]

Bertha. My father comes ! [*Chatterton rises.*]
Enter BURGUM, ALEXANDER CATCOTT, and BARRETT.

Chatterton. I thank thee, Mary Redcliffe.

Burgum. Yes, here they are !

Barrett. I told you it was true.

Burgum. How dare you meet my daughter ?

Alexander Catcott. Silly question :
Wren flies to wren, and why not youth to maiden ?

Burgum. Thistlethwaite said that you were here
together.

Chatterton. A truth with evil purpose is a lie.

Burgum. Are you not here ?

Chatterton. I am not quite awake.

Burgum. No insolence, or you shall feel this stick.

Chatterton. I think that I should welcome the first
blow

To show I am not dreaming.

Alexander Catcott. Gently, Burgum :
If you would have the maiden love the youth,
Abuse him and she will.

Burgum. She love that scrub?
And it is odds I would bestow her hand
On a pauper's brat scarce past his teething teens,
And foul my lineage with the vassal blood
That comes from sires like his! [*Laughs scornfully.*]

Barrett. Be not so loud.

Chatterton. Saint Mary, lend me patience !

Bertha. Father, cease.

Burgum. By John de Bergham's shade, it is too good
For anything but laughter !—Tell them, Bertha,
As you confessed to me some time ago,
That you love Rowley and not Chatterton.

Bertha. Confessions, father, are best made at home.

Burgum. Confessions—'slife !

Alexander Catcott. The lady's in the right :
Confessions to the public tang of pride.

Burgum. Oh, damn the public ; I will have the truth ;
Girl, answer me—you love or love him not.

Bertha. Dear father, I do not deny your claim
To learn the inmost secrets of my heart
For my own welfare and your peace of mind ;
But, sir, not here—I'll answer you to-night.

Burgum. Defied by my own child !

Chatterton. Sir, I will ease—

Burgum. You said the first blow would be welcome,
boy ;

Well, there it is ! [*Strikes Chatterton with his cane.*]

Bertha. O father—Chatterton !

Chatterton. [*Restraining himself with a strong effort.*]

Saint Mary, Mary, Mary !

Alexander Catcott. [*To Burgum.*] You are a brute !

Chatterton. It is a fitting prologue for the test :

I did not dream that I could bear a blow—

God help the next that strikes me !

Alexander Catcott. Strike him again,

And my stick will play about your Midas ears !

Burgum. I've humbled him before her.

Bertha. Raised him, sir ;

For well I know that no man but my father

Would live to say ' I struck him.'

Chatterton. I wish the blow

Had been much harder—it will leave no scar.

Alexander Catcott. [*To Burgum.*]

I warned you : she will love him now ere night,

Were she a maid of marble in the snow.

I love him better, and I've loved him long.

Chatterton. O Mr. Catcott, I have done you wrong—

The bitterest wrong because it was sincere.
Were you a priest, yourself should set the penance :
I'd rather murder than disprize a friend.

Alexander Catcott. Merciless vicars are the devil's
spies :

My province is to save and not to judge.
Your faults are many ; but your frozen pride
In kindness melts like icicles in the sun.—
Call on me at the vicarage to-night.

Chatterton. I go to London, sir.

Burgum. Had I known that,
I would not have chastised you.

Chatterton. Let that pass ;
I am on trial, and the worst is o'er :
You turned the thumbkin, and I did not flinch.

Barrett. You shall not go to London till I have
The parchments that will verify my book.

Chatterton. You're younger and more muscular than
Burgum :

I'll give them all to you with Rowley's works,
If you touch me with a finger of restraint,
Or say again 'you shall !'

Beriha. Be not so brash !
I know your courage would not blanch at Death.

Chatterton. Here's Horace Walpole with the barnacle

That fastens to each onward-ploughing keel,
And moves as swiftly as the loftiest ship
To unvexed anchorage in the silken East.—
Pray God, he may insult me !

Alexander Catcott.

Thomas, lad,

A quarrel now would rob you of your crown.

Chatterton. I will not quarrel, then—God bless you,
sir.

Enter WALPOLE and THISTLETHWAITE.

Burgum. [*Going to Walpole.*]

Welcome !—I stopped for you at the White Lion.

Walpole. I went up to the Lamb to lodge with
ghosts.

Bertha [*To Chatterton.*] My admiration is more
wholly yours

Than when you stood and faced them with the law.

Chatterton. I am a feather from the wing of Fortune.

Walpole. Miss Burgum, I have sought you every-
where ;

And, but for him, I should be searching still.

Bertha. A Bristol stone is barely worth the search.

Walpole. A lapidary can detect a jewel
Though in a bezel with delusive foil.—
I have received from London by the post
My ‘Castle of Otranto.’ Here it is.

Chatterton. Walpole and Rowley entered in the lists.

Walpole. I will not break a lance with any knight :
Rowley is Rowley, and myself am self.

Burgum. It is a masterpiece of noble wit ;
Second to none since John de Bergham wrote.

Bertha. You have not read it.

Burgum. But I've read its author.

Chatterton. Were your words conscious, they would
be superne.

Walpole. What is that coming here in garb grotesque
Bearing a rod of gold ?

Chatterton. The Mayor of Bristol !

Walpole. He looks more like a monkey than a mayor.

Chatterton. You have the prejudice but not the pride
Upholden by the conquest of the past.

Enter the MAYOR.

Mayor. Greeting, Bristolians—greeting to you all !

Walpole. Lord love us, he will make a speech.

Mayor. A speech !

You call upon the Mayor to make a speech ?

To-day we emulate our ancient sires,

And open our new bridge as they did theirs.

This is the day of days, the hour of hours—

Time's apex from which every thing descends.

Walpole. Let me crawl out from under ere you fall.

Chatterton. Your gorgeous robes of state are all awry.
 [*Arranges the robes on the Mayor.*]
 That gilded rod is not a walking-stick ;
 But an awful symbol of barbaric sway,
 And must be borne like sceptre in the hand.—
 By those two Britons, Brennus and Bellinus,
 You wear your helmet with the visor back,
 As if your enemies were in the rear !
 Turn it about.—There, that is better, sir.
 Draw round that girdle ; ornament your front,
 Or you will look, sir, like a Chinese junk :
 Most lofty in the poop.—'Odspins-and-needles !
 I must o'ersee the placing of each gaud,
 Or, in your ignorance of knightly forms,
 You'll have your horse's frontlet on his rump.

Mayor. I left George Catcott struggling with his
 clothes.

Chatterton. I must array him, too ; or he will stalk,
 Like wild Caradoc in the streets of Rome :
 With goatskin hose for muffettees on his arms,
 His short, white alba tied about his loins,
 And naked else.

Mayor. What was the Saxons' food ?

Chatterton. Turtles and nappy ale.

Mayor. Hail to their taste !

Each drop of Saxon blood within my veins
Cries 'turtle!' to my stomach.

Chatterton.

'Tis but wind.

Thistlethwaite. The Old Fox here serves turtles, I
believe.

Mayor. Bid them prepare one; I am nearly famished.

Chatterton. Stop!—not a mouthful shall his Mayor-
ship have,

Or this procession moves without my aid.

Mayor. Let me have one wee turtle.

Chatterton.

Not a fin.

Mayor. 'Tis heartless, boy, to make me fast three
hours.

Thistlethwaite. You have my deepest sympathy, dear
sir;

For at the school we know what hunger is.

I care not for myself, but for the lads

Whose growing bodies proper nurture need.

Mayor. Saint Julian! Latin is less use than food.

Thistlethwaite. The ham is sliced so thin that one
pig's thigh

Would carpet Brandon Hill in red and white;

And then there is no butter on the bread.

Mayor. Sandwiches and no butter—monstrous fraud!
What will the next race be?—How comes this thus?

Thistlethwaite. The master is a very worthy man,
But oft too heedless.

Chatterton. You back-biting flea !
You seek the master's place.—Another word,
And I will spank you in the public street
Until your bed will need no warming-pan !

Bertha. O Mr. Chatterton !

Alexander Catcott. Forbear, my boy.

Burgum. He is but jealous of the young man's parts.

Chatterton. Nay, jealous that a mongrel cur can thrive
By licking feet that ought to spurn him, sir.
What has he done—what will he ever do
That ranks with my least line ?

Alexander Catcott. The lad is just :
Since that Pride's Purge in lawyer Lambert's house,
I've studied Thistlethwaite with kindly eyes,
And found a mountebank.

Mayor. Cease this debate !
I would not wait my dinner for a cock-fight ;
Much less for this.

Chatterton. A fight is in me still.

[*A burst of laughter from the inn is heard.*]

Mayor. Those hungry sots will leave the larder bare.
[*Then to Thistlethwaite.*]
Go bid the landlord have prepared for me,

As soon as this sublime parade is o'er,
A knuckle of veal, and see the bone is blue
To prove the meat is young ; a Southdown leg
With fat as white as is the mountain snow ;
Some sweetbreads garnished with mushrooms and eggs ;
A chicken minced and stewed with pats of butter ;
A hamper full of strawberries red-ripe ;
Cucumbers, cabbages, and apple pie ;
A pregnant pudding in a brandy sea ;
And one large turtle turned to Saxon soup,
Flavoured with onion, marjoram, and ham,
And riched with lights and liver.—But beware,
Lest he should burst the bladder of the beast,
And drench my dainty appetite with gall.

Chatterton. Why not a calf's brain, too?

Mayor.

Yes, order that.

Thistlethwaite. It shall be done at once.

[*Exit into inn.*]

Mayor. [*To Chatterton.*] Come now with me :

If I must fast, the shorter time the better.

Walpole. Go all of you with him ; for I confess
A Joseph's ardour to interpret dreams
To Potipherah's daughter.

Burgum.

Royal dreams !

Come, Barrett, Vicar—you may be of aid.

Alexander Catcott. Were this a Grecian festival, I might.

[*Exeunt all except Walpole and Bertha.*]

Walpole. [*Sitting down upon the steps of the church.*]
Let us dispense with etiquette, my dear,
And be ourselves.

Bertha. Form oft is part of self.

Walpole. Nay, form is for those butterflies with brains
Much lower than their rank ; I need it not.
Sit here beside me and appraise this book.
[*Then after Bertha is seated.*]

‘The Castle of Otranto’ was a fling
Against the modern critics, who must blow
The dust of ages from each work of art,
Or blast it with their breath.—I published it
As a translation of a tale antique
Writ by an artful priest in the Crusades.

Bertha. Why, Rowley was a priest !

Walpole. A mere coincidence.
Then when the Gothic story was in vogue
And men of nicest censure praised it high,
I quick unfrocked, and owned that it was mine.

[*Laughs.*]

Bertha. You wanted courage.

Walpole. It was boldly wise

To grant the world a treasure, and by a ruse
To hasten the enjoyment of the boon.

Bertha. With power of wealth and preference of birth,
You were afraid to father your own child
Till it had fathered you. For one obscure,
There would be more excuse.

Walpole. You are too harsh :
It is the music not the parent muse—
The cord is severed when the song is born.
What matter whether Ossian or Macpherson
Wrote those Erse poems flashing like old Pindar's ?
Let the translator own the forgery,
And Gray is ready to pack up his lyre,
Saddle wild Pegasus, and set out at once
To greet the minstrel in his Highland home ;
And I will ride, if needful, on the crupper.—
But this is from the point ; here is the book.

Bertha. [*After turning over the pages.*]
'Tis writ in prose !

Walpole. Prose is a merchantman,
And Poetry a rakish pirate craft
With greater spread of sail. But I've a play
Called 'The Mysterious Mother,' writ in verse ;
And you shall read it when you come to London
As my most honoured guest.

Bertha. You have a press :
Why not print Rowley's poems, and exalt
A youth that has rare genius of his own ?

Walpole. What you command I'll do, but nothing
more.

Artists have pencils, authors have their pens ;
And the public must reward them at its will.

Bertha. It is unfair to make me give command,
When your ripe judgment should enforce the act.
A gift to Genius is a gift to Time,
And outranks Genius in its melting power—
'Tis a payment by the Present to the Future
Of what the Present owes the parent Past.
Think not to buy a quittance of this claim
With cunning words that counterfeit the truth :
Posterity is merciless but just.—
Now tell me of Otranto.

Walpole. 'Tis an attempt
To wed young Nature to mature Romance ;
And as the public have applauded me,
I must not say that I have wholly failed.
I've followed Shakespeare, not Corneille, dear,
In placing naïveté near the august.—
My servants speak as servants, not as counts.

Bertha. Therein you followed life.

Walpole. A keen remark ;
Though great Voltaire would censure me most sore
For setting a buffoon beside a seer.
But I appeal from Voltaire to himself :
Within the preface to his ' *Enfant Prodigue*,'
Marked by his style and ease of argument,
These words appear, ' *On y voit un mélange—*'
Do you speak French ?

Bertha. A simple phrase or two.

Walpole. It is a pity : I will teach you French
And somewhat of Italian ; though I hate
The blending of the tiger and the monkey,
With more of monkey than of tiger, dear,
In every male in France.

THISTLETHWAITE *enters from the inn and then departs.*

Bertha. There's Thistlethwaite.

Walpole. A very modest youth.

Bertha. An arrant sneak !

Walpole. That damns him in my eyes ; and let
him go.—

Read o'er this tale and tell me of its faults ;
For I have found each word of yours acute
And vital to the issue. 'Tis a shame—
But with your father I will have a talk
And seek a way to mend it.

Bertha. To mend what?

Walpole. To mend the blind decrees of eyeless Chance.

Bertha. That is the errand of a man of wealth.

[*The bells of Mary Redcliffe begin to chime.*]

Walpole. What means this chime of bells?

Bertha. I fancy, sir,

A messenger has entered the south porch,
With news that the procession is begun.

Enter THE PEOPLE.

Walpole. You are a sibyl, for the people come.

Gingerbread Man. Hot spice gingerbread! Hot
spice gingerbread!

Walpole. How harmless they appear in gay attire!
But when at table, brandishing their knives
In act to carve a mountain of roast beef,
They mind me of the cannibals, my dear.

Enter CHATTERTON, MRS. CHATTERTON, MARY, and
PHILLIPS.

Chatterton. We'll take our stand here, mother, on
the steps:

There could not be a better point of view;
For they will mass in numbers by this porch.

[*Then to Bertha.*]

I left the burghers ready in the meadows;
The chiming of the bells will bring them down.

Enter ALICE, BETTY, DOROTHY, and AGNES.

Agnes. There is the bard !

Chatterton. The Bard of Mary Redcliffe !
Come here, my dears ; there's room enough for all.

Alice. We saw them in the meadows.

Dorothy. They look odd.

Betty. Six of them put the Mayor upon his horse.

Gingerbread Man. Hot spice gingerbread ! Hot
spice gingerbread !

Chatterton. Sir Gingerbread, come over to these
ladies,

And prove a baker's right to golden spurs ;
For knighthood's won in tournaments of trade.
God save King George and bless his glorious reign !

[*Then after the man is come to the steps.*]

Here, mother, is a smoking piece for you.—

Miss Burgum, Mary, Alice—all must partake :

The Saxons fed on this and turtle soup ;

But save the crumbs, for waste betokens want.—

Will you not try it, sir ?

Walpole. No, none for me.

Chatterton. I beg your pardon, sir ; for I forgot
Your Gothic castle is of gingerbread.

Walpole. This is pure impudence !

Bertha. Excitement, sir.

Chatterton. 'Tis madness to speak truth.

[*A song celebrating the joys of the Pine Apple Inn is heard from the Old Fox across the street.*]

Mrs. Chatterton. Your father's song !

Chatterton. That's Thistlethwaite's contrivance to bedim

The perfect lustre of this flawless hour :

He went into the inn.—Wait till he comes !

Mrs. Chatterton. You must do nothing, Thomas !

Chatterton. Nothing, mother :

I am merciful as Mercy when I rule.

Enter BURGUM, VICAR CATCOTT, BARRETT, and

THISTLETHWAITE.

Burgum. There's Mr. Walpole ; we will join him.

Mrs. Chatterton. Now, Tom, be civil to them.

Chatterton. I will, mother.

Enter FLOWER GIRL.

Flower Girl. [*Singing.*]

My basket daily I supply ;
Come buy my nosegays, buy who'll buy.
Sweet violets ! Sweet violets !

Chatterton. The souls of hapless lovers are in flowers ;
And in the violet modest Ia dwells,
Still hiding from Apollo.—Here, my dear !

I will buy every blossom, lest I miss
A fragrant whisper in its haunted leaves.

[*Some of the people laugh.*]

Laugh on! My life's salvation lies in mirth:
Flowers must drink sunlight to preserve their bloom,
But they grow faster in a day of gloom.—
That rime is saucy, for it came unsought.

*Enter LAMBERT and his MOTHER from the street and
BROUGHTON from the porch.*

Mrs. Chatterton. You must be prudent, Thomas; for
you have—

Chatterton. [*Thrusting his hand into his pocket.*]

Five pounds, three shillings, and one penny, mother:
The number of the whirling spheres of song.

I can count all by feeling in my pocket;

[*Then glancing significantly at Walpole.*]

But gingerbread takes second place to-day.

Flower Girl. How many nose-gays, sir.

Chatterton. All you have gathered.

Flower Girl. Two shillings for the lot.

Chatterton. You shall have three.

[*Then as he throws the violets to those on the steps.*]

Catch them, fair ladies, catch them as they fly!

They will perfume the air, and in return

The air will cleanse them of my pitchy touch.

Flower Girl. I shall have more of them to-morrow,
sir.

Minstrels. [*Singing in the distance.*]

When King Kinghill in his hand
Held the sceptre of this land,
Sheening star of Christian light
The merkie mists of pagan night
Gan to scatter far and wide ;
Then Saint Werburgh he arose,
Doffed his honours and fine clothes ;
Preaching in his Master's name,
To the land of West Sexx came,
Where blaeke Severn rolls his tide.

Chatterton. [*Rushing up the steps at the first sound.*]
There're coming, mother ; listen to the strains !

Bertha. [*In alarm.*] His eyes are all aflame !

Mrs. Chatterton. Be calm, my son.

Chatterton. 'Tis worth a life to live a single hour :
Would one exultant moment were eterne !

[*The sounds grow louder and louder, and the people shout.*]

Then enter two BEADLES strewing fresh straw.

Chatterton. The Beadles !—The procession is begun !

*Enter GEORGE CATCOTT dressed in hose and doublet
of goat-skin, over which is a large white robe,*

without sleeves, reaching to his loins. On his left shoulder is a girdle of azure reaching also to his loins on the right, doubled back to the left, and fastened with a golden buckle dangled to his knee. In his hand is a shield representing Saint Werburgh crossing the ford.

Phillips. George Catcott sure !

Chatterton.

King Harold was a fool !

Catcott will be the first to cross the bridge.

[Enter a MAN in complete armour bearing an ancient sword of Bristol, followed by a band of Saxon Spearmen with triangular shields, short hauberks, and rude helmets defending the head and neck.]

Hold up your heads, you stooping, knock-kneed knaves !

And march as Ælla marched when forced to leave
His Bertha's arms to battle with the Danes.

[Enter six Clarions and six Minstrels.

Minstrels. [Singing.]

Then the folk a bridge did make
Over the stream unto the hecke
All of wood eke long and wide,
Pride and glory of the tide ;

Which in time did fall away.

Then Earl Leof he bespedde

This great river from his bed,
Round his castle for to run ;
'Twas in troth an ancient one,
But war and time will all decay.

Chatterton. You Danish ravens, give a louder croak !

[Enter a MAN bearing a banner with a boar's head on it.

The Saxon symbol !—see the boar's head, mother !

It makes a fitting banner for our Mayor.

[Enter the Priests and the Friars, some singing Saint Werburgh's song and others sounding clarions thereto.

Louder you shavelings !—Rowley was a monk :

[Enter the Mayor in golden robes waving a rod of gold, mounted on a white horse with mane and tail braided with ribbons, and with a small escutcheon of the ancient arms of Bristol on its forehead. Beside the horse walks a dwarf bearing in his hand the Mayor's helmet.

The Mayor ! the Mayor ! Look, mother, at the Mayor !

[Enter the Aldermen in scarlet copes and hats with sable plumes, mounted on black horses dight with white trappings.

The Aldermen !—Oh, I shall die of mirth !

[Enter a crowd of Saxon warriors, extending as

*far as the eye can reach, armed with axes, bills,
clubs, and short swords.*

Now Ælla bids defiance to the Danes !

*[The procession halts before the church in a glitter-
ing mass, and the singing ceases.]*

Mayor. Bristolians all, Time never saw before,
And ne'er will see again, a sight like this.—
Strike up the music ! Forward to the bridge !

Minstrels. *[Singing.]*

Now again with bremie force,
Severn in his ancient course
Rolls his rapid stream along,
With a sable swift and strong,
Moving many an okie wood.
We, the men of Bristowe town,
Have upreared this bridge of stone,
Wishing each one it may last
Till the date of days be past,
Standing where the other stood.

*[As the singing is resumed and the procession begins
to move, a horn, the roll of wheels, and the sound
of horses' hoofs are heard.]*

The People. The coach ! the coach ! the coach !

Chatterton.

It is the coach !

The dust is flying from those hoofs and wheels !

That horn blows welcome summons to the fray.
 Fear not, dear mother ; I am armed in steel !
 Good-bye, Tom Phillips ; I will write you oft ;
 My loving sister ; and my mother last—
 The last and dearest, for she gave me life.
 Saint Mary Redcliffe be your guardian Saint.
 Bristol is mine ; I now lay siege to London !

[The sounds of the approaching coach grow louder and louder ; the procession moves on toward the bridge ; Mrs. Chatterton throws herself sobbing into her son's arms ; and the curtain slowly descends.]

ACT FOURTH.

SCENE.—*Marylebone Gardens, London. In the centre is a pavilion with a curtained stage, on either side of which is an orange tree with a small lamp in each orange. At the front left are a rustic table and seats; and at the right is a statue of Milton seated as if listening to music. The trees and the pavilion, decorated with festoons of flowers and brilliantly lighted with lamps of various colours, give to the place the appearance of a gala night. On the rise of the curtain, ladies and gentlemen are strolling through the grounds, and two macaronis with two girls are seated at the table drinking wine. The men bray like asses and the girls crow like cocks. Then braying and crowing are heard from different parts of the gardens, and are followed by laughter.*

First Gentleman. Hens never crow till cocks are turned to asses.

First Girl. Eve must have crowed.

Second Girl. Ay, men have brayed since Adam.

Second Gentleman. A thrust between the ribs!

First Gentleman. A fitting thrust
For one of Eve's fair daughters.

Second Gentleman. Let us bray.

[*The men bray and the girls crow as before.*]

First Gentleman. [*Looking at a programme.*]
What is there left for fodder?—A Welsh harpist
And a Burletta, 'Cupid and the Titan,'
By Thomas Chatterton.

Second Girl. By Chatterton?

Second Gentleman. A raw recruit: I never heard
of him.

First Gentleman. The playing off of fireworks at
eleven.

First Girl. We must not stay so late.

Second Gentleman. Another hour
Will make departure early.

First Girl. But not safe:
Highwaymen grow like weeds in Marylebone fields;
And one among them, if report be true,
Is Satan in the semblance of a man.

First Gentleman. You mean Francisco?

First Girl. Yes, that is his name,
Though he is English I have heard it said.
He rides a stallion which he calls Black Death.

Second Girl. He rode from York to London in a night.

Second Gentleman. [*Laughing.*]

And leaped the Thames below Westminster Bridge !

Enter FRANCISCO.

First Gentleman. [*Putting his hand on his sword.*]

Let me meet this Francisco, and he'll ride
From Earth to Hades at a break-neck pace.

Francisco. I shall be present when you meet him,
sir. [*Turns quickly and disappears.*]

First Girl. [*In alarm.*] Who is that man ?

First Gentleman. I did not see his face.

Second Girl. Might he not be Francisco ?

Second Gentleman. Nonsense, dear :

He would not thrust his head into a noose.

First Girl. We should have gone to Vauxhall.

Second Gentleman. Sadler's Wells,

Where once a human monster ate live cocks ;

Or Finche's Grotto—

First Gentleman. Ranelagh, Jenny's Whim,

Or Adam and Eve Tea Gardens ; for your charms

Make each place Paradise, as they do this.

First Girl. Near Eden's apple tree a serpent crawled :
I may seem timid, but I dread that rogue.

First Gentleman. A jester merely who o'erheard my
threat.

Second Gentleman. Departing with the crowd has less
of risk

Than leaving here alone.

First Gentleman. Come, take a stroll ;
For walking, like the flow from Pancras Wells,
Is a general and a sovereign help to nature :
Cleanses the body, sweetens bilious blood,
And quells the rising vapours of the mind.—
We'll walk away from care. But first a toast.
[*They rise and pick up their glasses.*]

My meeting with Francisco—be it soon !

First Girl. [*Putting down her glass.*]
I will not so brave Fortune.

Second Girl. Nor will I.

First Gentleman. You cause my sword to blush within
its sheath.

Enter CHATTERTON, MONSIEUR BARTHELEMON, and
PHILLIPS.

Second Gentleman. There's Barthelemon, the leader
of the band.

First Gentleman. Salute him with the voices of the
morn.

[*Then after braying and crowing they resume their seats.*]

Chatterton. Walpole is here to-night ; and, as I said,
I have a weighty secret to unfold

Through this Burletta ; but at rehearsal, sir,
Your music was so loud it drowned my words,
And they were foaled for ears.

Barthelemon. Ze music loud ?

Chatterton. Questions are oft as crooked as their
marks :

I vow that in the hubbub you create
A thunderbolt would sound like a skittle-ball.

Barthelemon. Mon Dieu ! c'est le ton qui fait la
musique.

Ze toucher is so soft as ze—as ze—

As ze—petit ruisseau—vat call you him ?

Chatterton. I call him nothing, for I know him not.
Speak English or be dumb.

Phillips. Have patience, Tom.

Barthelemon. Ze music, too, for ears.

Chatterton. 'Tis not alone.

The words and music should together blend
Like two harmonious thoughts ; but by the Muse !
When little Cupid chants his chiefest lay,
Your fiddles whine like three-mouthed Cerberus
Unhouséd for the night ; your shifting trombones,
Your fifes and clarionets and deep bassoon
Rumble like the windy stomach of a god,
Making fair Venus when she sings appear

As if she chewed in silence on a bite
Of tough ambrosia ; and your French horns
Play merry hell with Jupiter's last speech.

Barthelemon. Ciel ! parler comme ça de l'art divin !
Ze music hell !—Diable ! vous êtes un enfant !

[*Walks up and down in a rage.*

Phillips. Do not excite him further.

Chatterton. But my words—

Barthelemon. Ze vords ! ze vords !—ve buy ze food
in vords.

Vous avez soif, you vish a leetle beer,
Some port—eh bien ! vous employez les mots.
Vous avez faim ; que voulez-vous ? du jambon ?
Ze tarts, ze cheesecakes, ou ze syllabubs ?—
Encore les mots, n'est-ce pas ? Parbleu ! ze vords
Pour les choses basses—les choses matérielles !

Chatterton. A novel punch—French wine and English
ale.

Why, you old fizzling bottle of champagne !
They employ far better melodies than yours
For hawking crabs and lobsters in the streets.

Barthelemon. Zest ! vous êtes gourmand !

Chatterton. I a gourmand, sir,
When both of your forefeet are in the trough ?
Glance o'er this list and cease your squealing, sir.

[*Takes a programme from his pocket.*]

A song, 'Swift wingèd vengeance nerves my arm,'

By Mr. Thomas, set by Barthelemon ;

Concerto on the violin, by Barthelemon ;

A rare French song, by Madame Barthelemon ;

Trumpet Concerto, by Master Barthelemon ;

An overture in Otho, Handel—bah !

A favourite song translated from the French,

Music and words by Monsieur Barthelemon ;

A new Burletta, 'Cupid and the Titan,'

By Chatterton, but set by Barthelemon.—

Ye gods ! the printer has made one mistake :

Fireworks, and not set off by Barthelemon !

Barthelemon. Ah, c'est trop fort !

[*The macaronis and the girls, who have been enjoying the quarrel, now burst into a laugh.*]

Phillips.

Speak less loud :

You are attracting notice.

Chatterton.

Friend Barthelemon,

If you obscure a syllable—but one—

Louis will lose a subject—do you hear ?

Barthelemon. Pardieu !

Chatterton. But let the words have scope to-night,
And you thereafter shall have your own will.

Barthelemon. Ze vords to-night ?

Chatterton. To-night.

Barthelemon. Ze music den ?

Chatterton. Then let your battery open on my lines
And blow them into dust.—Are you agreed ?

Barthelemon. Oui, oui !

Chatterton. Your hand on that.

Barthelemon. Volontiers !

First Gentleman. A peaceful ending to a tragic
theme

Ensures the vulgar plaudits of the pit. [*Claps his hands.*

First Girl. That must be Chatterton.

First Gentleman. Nay, Cupid, dear,
Contending with the Titan.

Second Girl. Lovely boy !

Phillips. [*To Chatterton who turns angrily to the
jesters.*]

Do not be nettled—it is only sport.

Chatterton. I can tell sport from insult by the smell.

Second Gentleman. By Jove ! he ruffled up his
feathered neck
Like bantam in a cock-pit.

First Gentleman. Cupid, Harry :

Ride on the figure till its race is run.

First Girl. Are not the darts of Cupid forged in
France ?

First Gentleman. The leaden ones in England for the French.

Second Gentleman. Does Mother Venus know her son's abroad

At this late hour of night ?

Second Girl. Love's day is night.

First Gentleman. Nimble Apollo could not dodge his darts—

How foolish in the Frenchman !

Chatterton. [*Going to the table.*] Gentlemen !

First Gentleman. [*Paying no attention to Chatterton.*]

Where were the vans of Cupid ?

Phillips. Tom !

Chatterton. [*Slapping the fop in the face.*] There's one !

How do you like its flapping ?

First Gentleman. [*Leaping to his feet.*] Ill-mannered boy !

You die for this.

Chatterton. My death before my epitaph.

Enter FRANCISCO.

First Girl. O Edward !

Second Girl. There's a tremor in his voice !

Second Gentleman. All of our jests were born of purest fun.

Chatterton. I slapped his face in fun.

First Gentleman. [*Drawing his sword.*] Defend yourself.

Phillips. He knows no thrust nor parry—it is murder!

First Gentleman. Then should he have a nurse.

Phillips. [*Despairingly to Chatterton.*] You are unskilled!

Chatterton. [*Shaking Phillips off and drawing his sword.*]

My skill is inspiration!—Stand apart.

[*They cross swords.*

Francisco. [*Striking up the weapons.*]

This quarrel's mine!

Chatterton. I am sufficient, sir.

Francisco. The first abused should be the first avenged.

I'll have a bout with him and then with you;

But 'tis unfair that I should meet you both

Without a breathing spell.

First Gentleman. What plaint have you

When we were strangers till you spoke?

First Girl. Beware!

Francisco. You live upon the same revolving globe,
Eat its rare products, fill its choicest space,
You breathe the air I crave, and childish prate
When I feel eloquent.

First Gentleman. That is no wrong.

Francisco. God's death ! 'odsfish ! and all the royal oaths !

You give the lie to me ?

First Girl. It is Francisco !

Francisco. Pray, who is he ?—Have at you, sir.

Chatterton. Forbear !

First Gentleman. I will not fight with you.

Chatterton. [*To Francisco.*] Come, sir, withdraw ;
For though your knightly purpose is not hid,
No champion shall uphold my challenge, sir :
This quarrel is my own.

Phillips. O Tom, dear Tom !

Francisco. Well, be it so ; and you—you popinjay !
If you but bleed this boy, tell o'er your beads :
You are as good as dead.—Make room for them ;
No movement and no sound. Salute ! salute !

First Girl. He shall not fight !

Second Girl. No, no !

First Gentleman. I will not fight.

Chatterton. [*To Francisco.*]

He fears but you : please leave the gardens, sir ;
My honour is at stake.

Francisco. Not with an ass.
I'll teach you how to change from tierçe to carte

With speed of lightning in its dazzling stroke ;
And you can kill him at your leisure, lad.

First Gentleman. We'll drink a quart of arrack, and
then part

As gentlemen by error made fast friends.

Francisco. Reserve your wine for your Dutch courage.—Go !

And take the baggage with you. Do not pause :
My bloodless sword is blushing in its sheath.

First Girl. It is Francisco !

Second Girl.

Or the devil sure !

Francisco. Either may be Truth's minister.—Begone !

[*Exeunt the macaronis and the girls.*

Barthelemon. [*Tremblingly to Chatterton.*]

Ze music vill be soft. Adieu ! adieu ! [*Exit.*

Chatterton. A great musician and, perforce, a fool.

Francisco. Put up your sword. When you salute,
my boy,

I'd rather be your foemen than your friend :

I nearly lost an eye. You must be taught

The art of fawning or the art of fence ;

For a manly temper and an awkward sword

Are dangerous companions.

Chatterton.

I owe you much,

And thank you from my heart.

Phillips.

A thousand thanks !

Francisco. 'Odsfish ! I would have done as much for sport.*Phillips.* If you but knew the value—*Francisco.*

I will learn.

[*Then turning to Chatterton.*]

You are so young and are so full of life,
My eyes begin to sparkle with your youth.
Tell me your hopes that I may live again
My days of esperance.—Sit down, my lads.

[*Then after they are seated.*]

Will you have wine ?

Phillips.

I seldom drink it, sir.

Francisco. And you ?*Chatterton.* My father drowned in that red flood—
No wine for me.*Francisco.*

Peace to his spirit, lad.—

I, too, abstain ; for tippling interferes
So rudely with my business, which needs haste,
And would be ruined by a muddled mind.—
You live in London ?

Chatterton.

I was born in Bristol ;

But left that sordid place three months ago.
Since then I have been writing vigorous truths

For Wilkes and Liberty against King George
And his Scotch favourites.

Francisco. You wrote in verse ?

Chatterton. Partly in verse, but mostly in vile prose :
My Muse was virgin till she came to town.

Francisco. Were you successful ?

Chatterton. I was nearly made,
And soon would have been haled unto the Tower ;
But Lord Mayor Beckford died and dashed my hopes.
Fell is in King's Bench, Hamilton is mean,
And all the other publishers are prudes
From recent prosecutions.—Were Fate to break
The silvered promise of this moonlit night,
I should be like young Harry Wildfire, sir :
Throned on a broken chair within an inch
Of a thunder-cloud.

Francisco. That cloud must never burst.—
Have you no poems with you ?

Chatterton. [*Taking out manuscripts.*] Four or five :
The Balade of Charitie and several more.

Francisco. Entrust them to me ; they shall be returned
Within a fortnight. Where do you reside ?

Chatterton. At Mrs. Angell's, Brooke Street, Holborn,
sir.

Francisco. I have a friend, the Reverend Dr. Fry,
My college chum though we are far apart.—
Why are you here to-night ?

Chatterton. Well, you must know
That I have written poems in Old English.

Francisco. I knew you were a poet from the first ;
For fire runs liquid in your nether eye.

Chatterton. To all the world and to a man that owns
A private press to give them to the world,
Those poems are antique. That man is here
With her who holds me past the fold of dreams ;
And my Burletta will unveil the truth.
The songs are mine—be bounteous, you stars !
This night is mine !—I should have killed that fop
Had he been master of all tricks of fence !

Francisco. [*Pouring out a glass of wine and rising.*]
To Thomas Chatterton and his success,
Captain Francisco drinks with thirsty soul
His first and his last glass of wine !

Phillips. Francisco !

Chatterton. I thought as much. How is it that you
bear

The name of one who levied toll on Metz
In sage Agrippa's day ?

Francisco. I stole it, lad,

From that bold bandit to conceal my own,
An honoured name made so by sack and slaughter.—
You've read Agrippa?

Chatterton.

Paracelsus, too;

And Count Gabalis, who in part reveals
The mystic People of the Elements.

Francisco. I have not read his treatise.

Chatterton.

It describes

The Gnomes, composed of subtlest parts of earth,
Guardians of treasures, mines, and precious stones
In subterranean realms; the Salamanders,
Born of pure fire and dancing in its flames,
Of wondrous beauty both in wit and form,
Though, like the poets, they have been maligned
By those that knew them not; the watery Nymphs,
Fairer than Fancy ever paints the fair,
Running with rippling laughter to the sea
And lolling on its roll at liquid ease;
The Sylphs, the rarest atoms of the air,
Basking in rainbows, drifting on the clouds
Like dreams above our state, or in the sweep
And swirl of wintry tempests, howling loud—
The wolves of the wind; for they are soulless things
Till in a maiden's passionate embrace
They find immortal life.—You smile at this?

What is to-day and was not in the past
Has always been ; and what will be is now.
The found is true, the undiscovered false—
That is the world's religion.

Francisco. But not mine,
Though threefold wrapped within Tartarean shade.—
Give me your purse.

Chatterton. 'Tis lean as lustful Amnon ;
For all that this Burletta brought was spent
On gifts and dress. Were I a poet true,
I would not squander so much on my back
When my dear head is needy.—Take it, sir.

[*Throws his purse upon the table.*]

Francisco. Six shillings and three pennies.

Chatterton. Nine—ill luck !
Og, King of Bashan, was nine cubits high.

Francisco. I'll take a penny : it shall interest
bear,
Though you are now the richer of the two.

[*Returns the purse and rises to depart.*]

Chatterton. Would I could utter the Mirific word
To summon angels with its wave of sound !
Be well advised ; you stand against the world,
And Chance is fickle to her fondlings, sir.

Francisco. [*Taking a phial of poison from his pocket.*]
When she proves false, and it may be to-night,
They shall ride fast that overtake me, lad.

Chatterton. [*Snatching the phial from his hand.*]
I'll have this for my penny !

Francisco. A fair exchange :
Powder is ruder but it breaks the shell.

Chatterton. You must not keep the devil in your pay ;
For there are moments when God seems to sleep,
And they are hard to pass through.

Francisco. More than hard.

Chatterton. I'll earn enough for both.

Francisco. Inspiring boy !
May nothing harsher than a moonbeam fall
Athwart your path.—Good-bye. [*Exit Francisco.*]

Chatterton. I'll save him yet ;
For peerless charity God dare not damn,
And it is still triumphant in his breast ;
And I will beat him, too, at play with foils.—
Sit down, dear Phillips : we must have a talk.
Mother is well, you say ?

Phillips. As when you left.

Chatterton. I would that she were here to share my
glory.

I could not bear that you should be away ;
My mother loves me, but you know me, friend.—
The presents were received ?

Phillips. Yes, all of them.

Chatterton. How did she like the cups and saucers,
Phillips ?

Phillips. She laughed and wept with joy.

Chatterton. I would have sent

A china tea-pot and a cream-pot, too,
But they are not in fashion, I believe :
Red china, which she has, is more the mode.

Phillips. The snuff-box won the favour of her eye.

Chatterton. It is right French and very curious.
The silver fan, the graver of the two,
Was meant for her ; the other one for Mary.
Sis would have chosen purple flowered with gold,
But purple and pink are more genteel and lively.

Phillips. She was well pleased.

Chatterton. And what did granny say
About the twisted pipes and herb tobacco ?

Phillips. She sat down in the ingle-nook that night,
And did the smoking for the blazing logs
Till we peered at each other through a fog.

Chatterton. Did Uncle Richard get his walking-stick ?

Phillips. Not till your mother had displayed the gifts

To all the neighbours, saying to each one
 'See what my son has sent to us.'

Chatterton.

Dear Mother !—

What is there new in Bristol ?

Phillips.

Thistlethwaite

Is now head-master of the Colston School.

Chatterton. He played at Brag most shrewdly foul and
 won.

We will eat passion-flower and die of laughing
 At all beflattered fools !

Phillips.

He would be naught

Beside the matchless fervour of your mind,

Were you not haughty to those holding power.

Chatterton. Let me not live till I grow politic.

Have you no news more helpful ?

Phillips.

Only this—

'Tis of myself.

Chatterton.

Oh, tell me of yourself !

Phillips. Well—well—I fear—

Chatterton.

Am I not part of you,

And do you hesitate ? You wrong us both.

Phillips. I scarce know how—

Chatterton.

Think to yourself aloud.

Phillips. I loved your sister Mary from the time—

Chatterton. You are betrothed ?

Phillips.

We are.

Chatterton.

The moon is full,

And unleashed billows bound and bay with joy !

You will be brother to me in the law

As you have been in love.—My brother Phillips !

[*Seizes his hand and Phillips coughs.*]

You have a cough !—I learned enough of physic

From William Barrett to cure current ills.

If you neglect your health you hazard mine ;

For you are needful as this fleshly frame

To stay my spirit's flight : I almost die

In your imagined death.

Phillips.

The cold is slight :

The tears and yearning for the lost be mine.

*Enter WALPOLE, BERTHA, and BURGUM.**Walpole.* How scrub these gardens are ! But for the
lamps,

'Twould be a common night.

Bertha.

Not so to me.

Walpole. Great Youth, my child, feels with poetic limbs

And sees with poetic eyes ; but Art must be

As plumb as Abishag to warm me now.—

There's Chatterton.

Burgum.

I must consult with him

About my Pedigree and Coat-of-arms.

Walpole. When does your play begin ?

Chatterton. In half an hour ;

It follows the Welsh harpist.

Walpole. Is it brief ?

Chatterton. As brief as patience.

Walpole. Then it is not long.

Chatterton. A Locke in logic !

Walpole. [*Turning to Bertha.*] He is very rough.

Bertha. The question was not polished,

Walpole. True, indeed :

Each author is laconic to himself.—

Tell us the plot.

Chatterton. The scene of my Burletta

Is on Mount Olympus 'mong the heathen gods,

And Cupid is the culprit—he writes verse.

Walpole. Poetry is gone to bed or into prose :

I fear it is all fustian.

Chatterton. Have no fear :

It is all fustian ; but, like Hamlet's play,

Its purpose is poetic—that is all.

Come, Phillips, to prepare it for the King.

[*Exeunt Chatterton and Phillips.*]

Walpole. Follow him closely, sir, if you wish sane

Coherent answers ; for his looks and speech

Border on Moorfields now.

Burgum. That is most wise. [*Exit Burgum.*]

Walpole. We'll sit near Milton, for the bard is blind.

Bertha. One sense deposed flies to another's aid ;
And he is listening.

Walpole. Delicately keen
As Madame de Sévigné ! yet you choose
To bloom in desert air, like friend Gray's flower.

Bertha. Flowers in their clime and maidens in their
sphere
Are wards of Nature.

Walpole. Bravo ! the chef-d'œuvre
Of wit and eloquence, but not of truth ;
For genial strangeness in a foreign soil
Oft quickens plants and mortals. At the Castle
My large laburnums pass their Alpine sires,
As do my orange trees their tropic kin.

Bertha. [*Pointing to one of the orange trees.*]
Behold my witness with its hollowed fruit
Aglow, like sin, with artificial light.—
'Twill soon be cast aside.

Walpole. True but not apt ;
For words felicitous may falsely shine.
Our poets, following the Romans, sing
Of cooling breezes in the summer's warmth ;

But Zephyr here becomes a north-east wind,
And our best sun is made of Newcastle coal.

Bertha. Put out the sun and see.

Walpole. [*Laughing.*] I own defeat
In rhetoric but not reason, Lady Clever,
And, flying from all figures, shall be frank.
Last month at Stowe, attendant on the Princess,
I could not help comparing you, my dear,
In mind and beauty and the flush of youth,
With Lady Temple, Lady Mary Coke,
Lady Anne Howard and a dozen dames.—
You are a star unsphered.

Bertha. Then, like a star,
I shall glide twinkling in an orbit strange
Till custom make it mine.—And now, dear sir,
Kindly make choice of some more worthy theme.

Walpole. Nay, by your leave ; for I have waited long
To bring this subject on the tapis, my love.
[*The sounds of a Welsh harp are heard.*]
Erato strikes her lyre !

Bertha. Court gallantry !

Walpole. Listen ; and let not modesty deny
What candour must approve. You have rare wit
And beauty coupled with a feline form
Whose every movement breeds a fond desire :

Wit needs applause and beauty needs a glass ;
And these are not in Bristol but in London
Among the leisured few. You shall o'erpeer
The proudest lords and ladies in the land ;
You shall meet Gray, a gentlemanly bard
That leans not on eccentric dress or phrase,
Like stuttering Goldsmith or the beastly Johnson ;
You shall put Rowley's poems into print ;
Nourish wild Chatterton, if so you please,
And watch his weedy growth ; though I admit
That, in the witching atmosphere you shed,
I hope to win your sanction and the world's
With chiming numbers and with tolling prose ;
For, though I say it, I am not untried.

Bertha. How can I work these wonders ?

Walpole.

By a word—

A 'yes' to one small question.

Bertha.

Ask it, sir.

Walpole. Will you be mine?—pardon, may I be
yours ?

Bertha. A step with Folly means a dangerous stroll !
I think you know, sir, that I am surprised.

Walpole. Whate'er you say I know ; be you as trust-
ful.

Bertha. I'll be as true.

Walpole. Why did I hear with patience
That Ode to Freedom by a prentice read ?
Why did I linger long in tiresome Bristol ?
Why did I tice your father to my house ?
Why have I borne the insults of that boy,
And now am here to patron his Burletta ?

Bertha. I dread the answer.

Walpole. 'Twas for you, for you.

Bertha. My indiscretion is so near a crime,
Who will believe me guiltless ?

Walpole. Your servant, lady.

Bertha. I did not purpose to mislead—

Walpole. To guide.

Bertha. The years between us—

Walpole. Are a stony brook
Across which you can step with gathered skirts
And wet nor boots nor lace. Appraise these truths :
My love is not the sparrow-hawk of youth,
Which seizes wit and beauty as its due,
But like an eagle—constant, strong, and poised.
I have the wealth and station to command
Whate'er prolongs life's spring and makes it lush,
And you are in your flower. A younger man
Must struggle blindly through a yellow fog,
Dragging you with him in his mad pursuit

Till all desire has flown the weary heart
And damning wrinkles come.

Bertha. Two souls ne'er love
Till scars record the battles won together.

Walpole. Some scars I have that tell of conflicts past ;
And there are victories still for us to gain
From knightly foemen, not from howling mobs
With brutal bludgeons armed. And when peace comes,
Like sunset's glow, I shall not be too old
For the enchantment of a maiden's voice
Or wildest rapture in her trembling arms.

Bertha. Oh, whither are we drifting ?

Walpole. Ask not whither :
Love laughs at harbours and the future, dear,
When in his gondola beneath the moon
On music-laden waters.

Bertha. We waste words :
I could not be your wife.

Walpole. No, not my wife
Till some slight obstacles have been removed,
For what we scorn is potent in our lives ;
But formal marriage is a fool's device
Wisely to govern fools.

Bertha. [*Rising excitedly.*] Your mistress, then.

Walpole. My wife in all save name.

Bertha. Your paramour ?

Walpole. Love is Love's only name in English, love,

Bertha. I would that Hatred had a single term,
That I could ease my bosom with a word,
For loathing chokes me !

Walpole. [*Rising in alarm.*] Compose yourself, I
beg.

Bertha. And I have listened !

Walpole. Listen to the end.
My father had a mistress whom he wed
When time and circumstance approved the act ;
But ere the nuptials I esteemed their child
My rightful sister.

Bertha. She shared not the shame.

Walpole. Chaste country morals have no place at
court ;
For peers have privilege wisely held from boors,
Who slabber gravy like roast beef new cut,
And must be tethered as promiscuous bulls
Reserved for breeding are.

Bertha. I'll hear no more :
My ears have been defiled !

Walpole. [*Embracing her.*] You must consent.

Bertha. Oh, let me go !

Walpole. When you have promised, sweet.

Bertha. Stop ! I will rouse the gardens with my cries !

Enter FRANCISCO masked.

Francisco. Good evening, Horry !—You appear perturbed.

Kisses patch quarrels with a light-o'-love.

Walpole. [*As Bertha sinks upon the seat.*]

You wear a mask—this is not a ridotto.

Francisco. We all wear masks ; for life is a ridotto.

Walpole. I do not know you, sir.

Francisco. A plague on fame !

Captain Francisco at your service, sir.

Walpole. Captain Francisco !

Francisco. Am I still unknown ?

Walpole. Do not alarm the lady.

Francisco. Not to find

The Fount of Youth and Water-Stone of the Wise ;

Though she, I fear, is past her virgin fright,

Or giddy Lust has mounted to your head

And left your body stingless.

Bertha. Spare me, sir.

Walpole. Help here ! thieves ! thieves !

Francisco. [*Seizing him by the throat.*]

That Welshman saved your life :

Had you been heard, you had not croaked again.

Bertha. He's unprepared !

Francisco. And will be to his death,
Though he should rival Enoch's yearèd son.—
Your purse. Be quick ! I have the Spanish heart
Which Aztec gold allays.

Walpole. [*Giving up his purse.*] There ; leave us, sir.

Francisco. The lady's purse : you shall buy her another,

And keep it plenteous as the fabled horn.
Age must pay dear to see his wrinkled face
Reflected in the amorous eyes of Youth,
Or lie with Dreams. [*Takes Bertha's purse.*

Walpole. You have our purses—go.

Francisco. [*Passing his hand over his eyes.*]

My eyes are bloodshot—ah, that garnet stone !
I have the sulphur, you may well believe,
But lack the gem for Paracelsian salve.

[*Takes Walpole's pin.*]

Your snuff-box and your rings.—God's death ! be quick :

To dawdle o'er a gift makes taking theft.

[*Takes the snuff-box and the rings.*]

Were you alone, I'd strip you naked, sir,
And let the world behold the shrunken skin
That cloaks your meagre soul.

Walpole. Now you have all.

Francisco. That bracelet, lady.

Bertha. Any thing but that :

'Twas given me—

Francisco. I take it is a gift.

[*Then after examining it.*]

Rare Roman coins—the dangling themes for song !

And I know one who can their tinkling turn

To canticles that would make Tiber thrill

And dream his halcyon days were come again.

I rob you, lady, to enrich the Muse.—

That plain gold band.

Bertha. My mother's wedding-ring !

Francisco. Keep it and use it as your mother did.

[*A bell rings.*]

The boy's Burletta !—He must have the stage.

'Odsfish ! I would not bring the youngster's play

In contrast with the gaudy scenes of life

Before a throng of worldlings ; so adieu.

May you be wealthier, sir, when next we meet

Is your poor servant's prayer. [*Exit Francisco.*]

Bertha. I feel ashamed

As if I were the shameless thing he named.

Walpole. But hear me.

Bertha. Take me to my father, sir.

Mary Redcliffe.

[ACT IV.]

Walpole. Have mercy, lady ! I was crazed with love.

Bertha. Call you that love ?—True Love would die of love

Ere he would base his love with lawless glance.

Walpole. Law can not pasture Nature on green baize.

Fate is to blame : had consequences smiled,
I would have offered you—

Bertha. I've heard enough :

To parley with seduction is to fall.—

I'll find my father, sir, without your aid.

Enter CHATTERTON, PHILLIPS, BURGUM, *and* THE
PEOPLE.

Walpole. Delay revenge, if you must have revenge
On one whose passion leaped the pale of pride :
'Twould ruin his Burletta !—There he comes.

Chatterton. The curtain soon will rise ; prepare yourselves.

I'll keep the moblings in their proper tier.

Sit on this bench ; I'll clarify the plot.

[*Drags the seat round and then speaks to the people.*]

Stand back ; beyond this line of vision, please !

Voice from crowd. I paid a half-crown for the right
to see !

Chatterton. Nay, sir, you bought a pint of Frontiniac

In the Rose of Normandy and own all France.

A jub of ale would give you title clear

To this fair Isle in fee. [*The people laugh.*

Girl's Voice.

What is the price

Of boyish kisses, sweet?

Chatterton. Your virtue, dear. [*Laughter.*

Woman's Voice. His eyes be bright as Peggy-wi'-t'-wisp,

But bring me some as can kiss me wi' might.

Chatterton. How are the Yorkshire yokels?

[*Laughter.*

Man's Voice.

With that sword

He looks like a fly empaled upon a pin.

Chatterton. Be not amazed, old rump-steak, at my presence :

Flies have the sense of smell, and you are high.

[*Laughter.*

Girl's Voice. He is Love's pet !

Woman's Voice.

I'd give my cat for him !

Chatterton. An old maid sure, or she would have a dog.

[*Laughter as the music begins.*]

The play is on ! Be silent, gentle friends,

And keep good-humoured like an English crowd ;

For we are on Olympus with the gods !

[*The curtain rises disclosing the top of Mount Olym-*

Mary Redcliffe.

[ACT IV.]

*pus with Jupiter, Juno, Apollo, Venus, Bacchus,
and other gods and goddesses seated on the
clouds.*

Chorus. [Air.]

Scrape, ye fiddlers, tinkle, tinkle,
Music makes my twinklers twinkle;
 Humming,
 Thrumming,
 Groaning,
 Toning,
 Squeaking,
 Shrieking,
 Bawling,
 Squalling,
O the sweet charms of tinkle, tinkle !

Jupiter. [Recitative.]

Now by the muddy waters of the Styx,
Which, like the Avon, tempers fools and bricks,
No music cheers me now. [Weeps.]

Chorus. Why this excretion ?

Sorrow finds solace only in repletion.

Jupiter. Fair Semele is dead !

Chorus. Alas ! alas !

That godless things on earth should come to pass.

Jupiter. She melted in my arms.

Juno. She froze, you mome,

Or you were warmer than you are at home.

Jupiter. Nor can my wife this burning grief assuage,
For Juno's forty thousand years of age.

Juno. But twenty-seven thousand, you old brute !
And lustier than your thundership to boot.

Jupiter. To twenty-seven women cling till fifty :
In years, and only years, our wives are thrifty.

Juno. [*Air.*]

I will never tamely bear
All these wrongs and slights, sir ;
Heaven and all the gods shall hear
How you spend your nights, sir.
Drinking, swearing,
Roaring, tearing,
Wenching, roving everywhere ;
Whilst poor I
At home must lie,
Wishing, scheming,
Sighing, dreaming,
Grasping nothing but the air.

Woman's Voice. Jove's very like my husband !

Women's Voices. And like mine. [*Laughter.*]

Jupiter. [*Recitative.*]

Hence, thou eternal tempest, from our regions,
And yell in concert with infernal legions !

Bacchus. [*Staggering and holding aloft his bowl.*]
'Odsniggers, Sire ! I know your sad condition,
And I will be your majesty's physician.

Man's Voice. That's Bacchus with a bowl of royal-bob !
[*Laughter.*

Bacchus. [*Air.*]

Fill the bowl and fill it high,
Vast as the extended sky !
Since the dire disease is known
Wine's the balm to cure the wound.

Jupiter. [*Recitative.*]
You hogshead of liquor and its bitter lees !
Nor wine nor brandy now can give me ease

Chorus. Cure him, Apollo !

Apollo. Sire, at your desire,
I'll strike my lyre, and light your wonted fire.

Jupiter. That rimes too glibly to be more than gab ;
The modern Muse is nothing but a drab.

Venus. Cupid, my liege, awaits your royal pleasure
To chant some verses writ in modern measure.

Jupiter. [*Laughing.*] Cupid write poems?—he is but a
boy !

Venus. Boys frequent add to our celestial joy.

Jupiter. 'Tis Cupid not Adonis.—Well, my dear,
I can deny you naught : let him appear ;
But have the arrows taken from the wight,
For I have no fair partner for the night.

[*A cloud parts and Cupid with a manuscript appears*
Chorus. That boy a poet !

Venus. Hearken to his lay.

Cupid. Peace, heavenly rakes and strumpets, or away!

Jupiter. Begin the reading ; not another word ;
But for fond Venus, you had not been heard.

Cupid. [*Unrolling his manuscript and chanting.*]

The pleasing sweets of spring and summer past,
The falling leaf flies in the sultry blast.

Burgum. That's Chatterton's rendering of de Berg-
ham's song !

Cupid. The fields resign their spangling orbs of gold,
The wrinkled grass its silver joys unfold,—

Jupiter. Enough ! enough !

Chorus. [*Scornfully.*] The silver joys of grass !

Cupid. You gods are geese and Jupiter's an ass !

Venus. Be calm, dear Cupid.

Jupiter. [*Feeling in his pockets.*] By my horrid head,
If I find thunderbolt, I'll strike you dead !

Cupid. You can make poets suffer but not die.

Jupiter. I can not kill a poet ?—boy, you lie !

[*Then after a fruitless search.*]

Juno has robbed my breeches over night,
And I am thunderless and powerless quite.

Cupid. If my poor lay excite your regal scorn,
I have a Titan's song—a Titan born
Ere you, my liege, were suckled by a goat.

Jupiter. A Titan's song !—I long to hear each note.

Cupid. Make me invisible but for a minute,
And I will show your godship what is in it.

Jupiter. Be thou unseen.

Cupid. Have stringèd music sound.

Jupiter. Cease singing, and let Bacchus' bowl go round.

[*While the bowl is passing from immortal to immortal,
Cupid runs a quill over the parchment.*]

Chatterton. He antiquates the spelling !

[*Cupid rubs something on it.*]

That is ochre,

Gilding it like the Phrygian touch of Age.

[*Cupid sprinkles it with a powder.*]

That's charcoal counterfeiting cindered years.

[*Cupid crumples it in his hands.*]

It must have creases or it is not old.

[*Cupid throws it upon the ground and runs his foot
over it.*]

It must be dusty or it lacks desert.—

Were he in Hades, he would smoke it, too !

Francisco. [*Who has stood in the background unseen.*]

Olympus now will echo with acclaim.

Walpole. [*Turning and seeing him.*]

Arrest that villain ! He fleeced me to-night—

Francisco is his name !

The People.

Francisco ?—oh !

[*General consternation. The men cry out 'Francisco !' the women scream, and the actors scurry from the stage. Francisco claps a mask on his face, draws a pistol, and steps into the open space.*

Francisco. Who will arrest Francisco, when the gods
Run skimper scamper from their sacred mount
At mention of his name ?

Burgum. In the King's name—

Francisco. May you and George the Third be damned
together.

A Girl. The rogue is comely.

Francisco. [*Drawing her to him and kissing her.*]

And your lips are ripe.

Now boast that once Francisco kissed you, dear.

Man's Voice. A dozen rush upon him !

Woman's Voice. No, I beg !

He gave us money when we were in need.

Man's Voice. He helped me in distress !

Girl's Voice. He rescued me !

Chatterton. Away with speed ; you are in danger
here !

Francisco. The risk is slight ; for mobs are headless
things.

Chatterton. But my Burletta—

Francisco.

Pardon me, my lad.

Horry should die for this, were it not better

To let the gouty creature draw his breath

Till every step discharges shooting pains

And chalk-stones issue from his swellèd hands.—

Good-night, my friends ; to follow me is death. [*Exit.*

Chatterton. Recall the actors.

Walpole.

I have heard enough.

[*The scream and bursting of a rocket are heard.*

The People. Fireworks ! fireworks !

[*Excunt the People.*

Chatterton.

The play is overthrown.

Walpole. I know its purport.

Chatterton.

It shall be made clear :

I am old Rowley, and his works are mine !

[*The hoofs of Francisco's horse galloping away are heard.*

Walpole. I will not trust one that consorts with thieves.

Chatterton. You shall have proof.

Walpole.

'Tis woven in the songs ;

And Gray and Mason shall unravel them.

I'll call on you and tell you their report.

Bertha. Old Rowley's works are yours?—Do not profane

The awful silence of a minstrel's tomb,
And from his pulseless temples tear the wreath
Of mortal frailty and of deathless song.—
Twice have I been most rudely undeceived :
Take me, dear father, from these gardens, please !

[Throws herself sobbing into her father's arms.

Chatterton. By my dead father's memory—

Phillips.

Tom, not now :

You shall convince them when the time is meet.

Burgum. I'll to the Heralds' College in the morning.

Bertha. Take me away—my sight begins to reel !

Walpole. Have courage, lady.—To the carriage, quick !

[Exeunt Walpole, Burgum, and Bertha.

Chatterton. Damn Saturn's searing rays !—I am undone.

Is this the fruitage of my nurtured dreams ?
Are these the purple berries and green leaves
Enwreathed in nectared fragrance for the brow
Of immortal child among immortal men ?—
I will write scurvy things to make hell laugh,
And gain in lust what I have lost in love.

[Sinks down by the table and bows his head upon his arms.

Mary Redcliffe.

[ACT IV.]

Phillips. [*Putting his arm round him.*] Dear Thomas!

Chatterton. [*Raising his head.*] Phillips, were it not for you—

O my dear brother, were it not for you!

[*An explosion of fireworks and the shouts of the people are heard; the gardens are lighted by the glow; and Chatterton, mastering his emotion, rises quickly.*]

Come, Phillips, let us see the fireworks play.

Curtain.

ACT FIFTH.

SCENE.—*Chatterton's lodging. A garret in the house of Mrs. Angell, London. The floor is bare; the roof slopes to a casement at the back; and a door, at the left, opens on the stairs. Near the casement is a small bedstead; and not far from the doorway are rude chairs and a table, on which are a lighted lamp, a few old books, an inkhorn, and quills and manuscripts in disorder. Many scraps of paper are on the floor by the table. At the opposite side of the room is a wash-stand; and near it are a mirror, a large deal-box, and a chair on which is the suit of silk worn by Chatterton in Marylebone Gardens. On the rise of the curtain, the moonlight is streaming over the roofs of the houses into the room; and Mrs. Angell and her two children, Harry and Bertha, are discovered. Mrs. Angell is sweeping, Harry is brandishing the poet's sword, and Bertha is scrawling with a quill at the table. It is the night of August 24th, 1770.*



Watchman. [*From the street.*] Past nine o'clock
and a moonlit night! Past nine o'clock and a
moonlit night!

Mrs. Angell. Be careful, or you'll overturn the ink
And blot his poems!

Harry. What are poems, mother?

Mrs. Angell. They are like hymns: at least the lines
begin

With capitals; and those who write them starve.

Bertha. I'll write a hymn.

Mrs. Angell. Give me that sword at once.

He was so happy when he showed me this,
And told me of the things that he would buy
For his dear mother; but the boy is down:
They never should have let him go from home.

Harry. I'll go away some day.

Bertha. May I go, too?

Mrs. Angell. The bed has not been used; and all he
wrote

Is torn in pieces.

[*As Mrs. Angell picks up the bits of paper, Harry
goes to the deal-box, opens it, and takes out several
manuscripts.*

Enter CHATTERTON, who stands in the doorway.

Harry. Mother, what are these?

Mrs. Angell. Put them away ! Were Chatterton to come,

He would be as furious as he was the time
Your father told him of a vacant clerkship.

Bertha. I'll tear my poem, too. [*Tears up a paper.*

Mrs. Angell. [*Taking the pieces out of her hands.*]

You naughty girl,

You have destroyed his work !

Bertha.

He tears them up.

Mrs. Angell. What can be done ?

Chatterton. [*Coming down.*] Do not reprove the
child :

Her little fingers are at school.

Mrs. Angell. [*In alarm.*] O sir !—

Chatterton. The song is worthless.

Mrs. Angell.

As you were not in,

I came to sweep the room ; for once you said

That poets hated brooms.

Chatterton.

Uncleanly beasts !—

Did any letters come ?

Mrs. Angell.

No, none at all.

Chatterton. And no one called ?

Mrs. Angell.

I really can not say ;

For I was not at home this afternoon.

Chatterton. I trust your outing was a pleasant one.

Mrs. Angell. You should have seen the sunset, sir,
to-day
From Hampstead Heath.

Chatterton. I saw a sunset once
From Penpole Point near Bristol, looking 'cross
The lowlands and the Severn into Wales :
The globe descending bulged upon a peak,
And, to my fire-intoxicated eyes,
Became a golden punch-bowl for the gods ;
Then, sinking deeper, made the verdant hills
Volcanoes in eruption.—Do you smoke ?

Mrs. Angell. Why, what a question !

Chatterton. My grandmother smokes ;
My pate is but a pipe for puffing vapour ;
And the iridescent token in the cloud
Has faded to a fog-bow.—Close the casement !

Mrs. Angell. You are three-quarters famished : for
two days
You have not tasted food.

Chatterton. I need no meat.

Mrs. Angell. I'll fetch you oysters—any thing you
crave.

Chatterton. Tell o'er some viands, and I'll eat your
words.

I should not starve when I bequeath the world

A magic board where centuries will feed
Upon the fledgelings of my brooding brain,
And drink the Burgundy within these veins.

[Slaps his arm fiercely.]

But then I am a panther with a spot
That wanes and waxes with the fitful moon,
And must be prodded that I may display
My jungle-nature.—Shut out the moonlight!—please.

[Then to Bertha as Mrs. Angell goes to the window.]

Come, sweetheart, come.—Why does she turn away?

Harry. She is ashamed.

Chatterton. Ashamed? ashamed of what?

Harry. Because she has red hair.

Chatterton. My hair is red.

We'll put our heads together, and make a torch

To warn benighted vessels from the Gilstones.

What is her name?

Harry. Her name is Bertha, sir.

Chatterton. Saint Mary!—Come, tiny Bertha, come
to me;

You must not be afraid.

Bertha. *[Going to him.]* I'm not afraid.

*[Chatterton takes her in his arms and sits down by
the table.]*

Harry. No one but Mr. Cross has hair like hers ;
And that makes mother angry.

Mrs. Angell. Hold your tongue !

Chatterton. If I were rich, I'd dower you, little maid.

[*Fumbles among his papers and selects one.*]

Here is my 'Clifton' : keep it till my death ;
They will bid more for it than I have had
In all my life.—Your hair is lovely, dear ;
In sunlight it will glint more varied hues
Than Cornish heath upon Goonhillee Downs.
How old are you ?

Bertha. I used to be five years,

But now I'm six.

Chatterton. When were you five, my girl ?

Bertha. A long, long time ago.

Chatterton. Young years are long.

Mrs. Angell. Come, dears, before you tire the gentleman.

Chatterton. Leave them with me : I dread to be alone ;

And children cheer me, for I ne'er was child.

I'll learn their language and will think their thoughts.

What shall we play, my love ?

Bertha. Why, any thing.

Chatterton. Let us play 'church.'

Harry. I'll be the rector, then.

Chatterton. I'll be the sexton, and inurn the dead.
And you'll be Mary—that's the church itself.

Mrs. Angell. And I?

Chatterton. Will be the churchyard for the poor.

[*Then glancing round.*]

This garret's very like the muniment room
In Mary Redcliffe's porch.—At Whitsuntide,
When the Cathedral bell was tolling midnight,
I left old Rowley's work ; and, stealing down
Into the tomb-paved chancel, placed six lights
Upon the altar, and then knelt and prayed,
With mailèd spirits and their beauteous dames,
The haughty rulers of a thousand years,
Kneeling about me.

Bertha. I don't like this game.

Chatterton. You will, my dear, for you shall light the
candles.

[*Takes a bundle of candles from a drawer in the table.*]

Your innocent touch will turn this fat to wax,
Or Poverty must plead for dispensation.

Light this, my child. [*Bertha lights it at the lamp.*]

I'll stand it on this tome :

There must be one above and two below.

Another ; and another. [*Bertha lights two more candles, and Chatterton places them so as to form a triangle.*]

Now three more.

Harry. Let me light one.

Chatterton. Nay, you shall blow them out.

[*Bertha lights three candles, and Chatterton forms another triangle on the opposite side of the table.*]

The hilt of this bright dagger is the cross.

[*Sticks a dagger upright in the centre of the table.*]

With Mary Redcliffe lying at its foot.

[*Places a miniature near the blade of the dagger.*]

Now is our altar perfect, with six fires,

The number of perfection ; for its parts—

Its half, its third, its sixth—produce itself :

The number of production ; in six days

This earth was made and man must labour six,

The Hebrew slave six years obeyed his master.—

Would that these candles were of wax from bees,

The cleanest insects, to denote pure life,

As their flames symbolise the Light of lights,

The Beacon for the world ; and were ablaze

Upon the altar of my soul to-night,

Where rushes dipped in tallow flicker low.—

I can not worship blindly in the dark !

Mrs. Angell. Do some thing else : this is no sport to you.

Bertha. Let us play 'mother.'

Chatterton. I'll be grandfather, dear.

Enter CAPTAIN FRANCISCO.

Francisco. The door was open, so I helped myself.

Chatterton. [*Going to him and taking his hand.*]

You are most welcome.—We are playing games :
These are my daughter and grandchildren, sir.

Francisco. I will be Uncle Cræsus to each one.—
Your hand is feverish and your face is haggard.
What is the matter ? Tell your uncle all.

Mrs. Angell. The boy is starving, sir.

Chatterton. No more of that.
Seven days, 'tis said, a mortal can exist
Without a bite of food : five more are left.

Francisco. Come here, my chicks, and peck at yellow grain.

[*Throws a handful of sovereigns upon the floor, and the children scramble for them. Then to Chatterton.*]

Your mind is rare and gold is plentiful :
No more of starving, lad.

Bertha. That one was mine !

Francisco. You bantam rooster, you should scratch for her.

How many have you now?

Harry. One, two, three—six.

Bertha. And I have only three.

Mrs. Angell. You have enough.

Francisco. [*After giving three more coins to Bertha.*]

Now you have six. What will you do with them?

Bertha. I'll buy a baby.

Harry. I will buy a sword.

Francisco. Most aptly spoke according to the sex.

Now mother gets the cage in which there are

A few goldfinches left. [*Gives a purse to Mrs. Angell.*]

Mrs. Angell. You are too kind.

Francisco. The pleasure of the gift is largely mine :

I am your debtor, madam.

Mrs. Angell. Come, my dears ;

The gentlemen must wish to be alone.

Chatterton. Will you not kiss me, Bertha, ere you go?

Mrs. Angell. [*To Francisco.*] God bless you, sir.

Francisco. He knows my life too well.

Bertha. [*To Chatterton in a loud whisper.*]

I love you best.

Francisco. And you love wisely, dear.—

Good dreams or none, sweet sleep and joyous waking.

Bertha. Good-night.

Chatterton. Good-night.

Harry. I'll race you down the stairs.

[*The children run out of the doorway down the steps, and are heard screaming and laughing for a minute afterward. Francisco goes with Mrs. Angell to the door.*]

Mrs. Angell. Your coming is a blessing to us all.

Francisco. May it prove so.

Chatterton. Amen.

Francisco. Adieu.

Mrs. Angell. [*As she leaves the room.*] Good-bye.

Francisco. [*Turning and walking back to the table.*]

Oh, that a squall-like mood should wreck a life !

What you are suffering I have suffered, lad,

Without your power. You know not what that means :

Why, I speak Latin and can only steal.

God's death ! let us be frank, nor care a groat

How many angels can a footing find

Upon a needle's point. Do not reply :

Your reason is unshipped by want, my boy,

And gusty words will blow you on Hellweathers.

Let me do all the storming ; and I'll swear

Like some old sea-dog with a salted soul ;

Not at you, lad, but with you.

Chatterton.

Bless you, sir.

Francisco. A poet starving !—by chameleon's liver
Drenched with a lapwing's blood, it shall not be.
There's food for flesh and there is food for fancy.

[*Gives a purse and a bracelet to Chatterton.*

Chatterton. That's Walpole's purse ! and that is—
pray, continue.

Francisco. You are in need ?—why, you shall mount
to fame.

On gold and silver rungs, and at a sneeze
Shall spit into the mouth of every toad
That climbs upon a tree. Your pride is great ?—
You give to me more than I can bestow :
A goal ahead, which I have never had
Since I at college took a double-first,
And learned that learning is not power to do
High Aspiration's bidding. It is hard
To find your mind is but a levant sponge—
To be a disappointment to yourself.

Chatterton. You are unjust to self.

Francisco.

I am unjust :

My mission's greater than I dreamed it was.

Enter MRS. ANGELL.

Mrs. Angell. A gentleman is coming up the stairs.

Chatterton. It must be Walpole: you have brought me luck!

He said that he would call.

Francisco.

I'll walk apart.

[*Goes to the window and stands with his back to the others.*]

Enter HORACE WALPOLE.

Chatterton. Good evening, sir; your coming is most kind.

[*Then to Mrs. Angell.*]

You need not wait; I'll tend him down the steps.

[*Exit Mrs. Angell.*]

Walpole. It is less hazardous to mount those steps Than to ascend Fraud's ladder.

Chatterton.

You should know.

Walpole. A suzerain's banter, truly, from a serf;
For though I value not my lustrous birth,
Which has been more a hindrance than a help—

Francisco. [*Coming down with a black mask covering the upper part of his face.*] You are a most insufferable coxcomb.

Walpole. [*Starting up.*] How dare you—oh!

Francisco.

That 'oh' expresses more
Than any page you've penned. You should not pale,

Nor palm that spinel ruby in your frill :
This roof is sacred and my promise whole.

Walpole. What do you wish ?

Francisco. To barter words with you.

Walpole. My talk is only prattle.

Francisco. Lucian wrote

Of some Egyptian temple near the Nile,
Painted and gemmed to shrine a jabbering ape
That barked to mark the hours.—Do you tell time ?

Walpole. You are—what you must own yourself to be.

Francisco. There Pride and Prudence claimed the
right of way,

And Pride went to the gutter.

Walpole. You are so clever.

Francisco. As we accept offensive facts as fun,
Truth is a well of wit, whose waters pass
Those of the ' Dog and Duck.'

Walpole. [*Sarcastically.*] I am o'ermatched.

Francisco. Nay, we are equals, take us all in all.

Walpole. 'Twould make me vain to think so ; really,
sir.

Francisco. You have forebears of caste and so have I ;
You drink iced water and I quaff no wine ;
I have a mistress, you have Kitty Clive,
And Rumour says a girl named Burgum, too.

Chatterton. Then Rumour lies ! She is as pure as
Love

Before the fall of man.

Francisco.

I am at fault ;

And on remorseful knee I ask indulgence ;

[*Sinks upon one knee and rises quickly.*]

For Rumour is as slanderously chaste

As wanton saved by marriage from worse lot.

But Horry ceded Cliveden to his Kitty.

Walpole. You are but quibbling ; come now to the
pith.

Francisco. I borrow sparklers and make no return,
And taking without giving is a theft.

You have three patent places in your gripe ;

You are the Usher of the Exchequer, sir,

Comptroller of the Pipe, and Clerk of the Estreats ;

And calmly purse four thousand pounds a year,

For which the service rendered is mere form.

I rob the rich, you rob the rich and poor ;

I am an outlaw, but we both are thieves.

Between us, sir, there is not much for choice.

Walpole. I will not wrangle with a stultus pravus.

Francisco. Fortuna nimium quem fovet stultum facit ;

And Fortune favours you beyond desert,

Like some fond mother with a foolish child ;

For breathing earns you luxury and fame.
 But if you are learned and I am ignorant,
 Recall two proverbs centuries apart :
 A Greek says ‘*Ἀμαθία θράσος φέρεται*,’
 And some provincial Gaul, in musty voice,
 Cries ‘Ignorance ne quiet pas prudence !’
 Wherefore a modern gives this sage advice,
 ‘Il ne faut jamais affronter un sot.’
 Shall we dispute in Spanish or in German ?
 God save us all, sir, from our mother tongue !

Walpole. You are, forsooth, a most amusing fellow.

Francisco. A Fellow once of Balliol.

Walpole. Oh, indeed !

Francisco. You must not patronise me with a drawl,
 Lest we should meet at midnight on the road.
 You well may startle ; stranger things have happed.—
 You have some dealing with this gifted boy,
 Who, with mere English, overtops us both :
 Be square or you shall rue it, sir.—Good-night.

[*Exit Francisco.*

Ink Man. [*From the street.*]

Come buy my writing ink ! Fine writing ink !

[*Sings.*]

My ink is good, as black as jet,
 'Tis used by princes and their set ;

If once you venture it to try,
Of this I'm sure—none else you'll buy.

Come buy my writing ink ! Fine writing ink !

Walpole. [*After hearing a door below close.*]

Boon company, a cut-throat and a sharper.

Chatterton. I beg of you do not provoke me, sir.
You find me in a mood remote before :
Reluctant for a fray, but dangerous.

Walpole. Were not the Rowley poems forged by you?

Chatterton. I plead 'not guilty.'

Walpole. Why, you so confessed ;
And Gray and Mason date the verse as late.

Chatterton. In my brief study of the law, I gleaned
That forgery is a writing made or marred
Against another's right. Whose right is crossed
If, as a monk, I elfin grants engross ?
The crime is in your diction not my deed :
You seek to damn me with a word misused.

Walpole. Your craft might lead to sembling notes of
hand.

Chatterton. Go punish might-bes and the Pope will
hang.

You wrote 'The Castle of Otranto,' sir,
And in the preface solemnly declared
That in the north of England it was found,

Translated from black-letter of Muralto
By William Marshal ; all of which is feigned.
You donned a domino to shirk the world ;
I wore a cowl lest it should pass me by.
Perhaps, in realm ideal, both would swing
For masquerading in the fane of Truth ;
But we are on the earth, where life at best
Must be a compromise or martyrdom.—
If you come here in fairness, welcome, sir ;
If fixed in bias, better to depart.

Walpole. I will depart when going gladdens me.
You can not play Francisco with me, boy :
Although I might mistake you for his son,
Did I not know your father's wild career.

Chatterton. You'll drive me into Billingsgate or Bed-
lam.

My father was a man of noble parts,
Perchance a genius, pressed by low estate
To see that children came clean-washed to school,
And bear the fool-dominion of a board.
Small wonder he found solace in the cup,
And wandered on the Avon's bank at night
Shaking his frenzied fists at all the stars
In impotent defiance.

Walpole.

Your mother, too—

Chatterton. She has a limitation in some things,
But not in love. Speak not her name again :
I would protect you while I have the power.

Walpole. She may be milky but she is low-bred.

Chatterton. You've loosed a wild-cat on your family
tree !

Your own reputed father was a beast—
A bull in office brought down by the nose.

Walpole. How dare you say 'reputed' ?

Chatterton. You shall hear :

Years after your last brother you were born.

Walpole. What if there were eleven years be-
tween us ?

Chatterton. It is one candle : I will melt five more.
No human beings less resemblance show
Than you and Robert Walpole.

Walpole. God of heaven !

Chatterton. His bulky form, his comely face—

Walpole. Enough !

Chatterton. You have Lord Hervey's lineaments and
frame,

His trick in writing and his smirking grace.—
Three candles lighted in as many lines.

Walpole. [*Starting toward the door.*]

I will not listen to this infamous charge.

Chatterton. [*Seizing the sword and running to the doorway.*]

Approach this door, and I will turn a leech
And test whose brat you are.

Walpole. You are insane !

Chatterton. Sir Robert and his lady were estranged.

Walpole. It is a lie !

Chatterton. Throughout your infancy,
Your father treated you with tart neglect ;
And till at Eton you upheld his name,
Could not endure your cuckoldising face.

Walpole. 'Tis fell as night !

Chatterton. I have another dip.
You bear the birth-marks of a love-child, sir :
Fastidious, boorish ; artificial, frank ;
Broad and despotic ; generous and mean ;
With potent talents in a petty mind.
The last of the six candles is aflame :
Your father is not Walpole but Lord Carr,
The eldest son of Hervey, Earl of Bristol !

Walpole. Oh, for a sword !

Chatterton. [*Throwing the sword to Walpole.*]

A fairy heard your cry.

Walpole. [*Picking up the sword eagerly.*]
Now I will pierce your heart as you pierced mine.

[*Chatterton bursts into a wild laugh.*]

With words not weapons.

Chatterton. They must needs be sharp.

Walpole. Sharper and shorter than a hunting-knife.

You heard Francisco speak of one you love :

He spoke the truth, for she at last did yield.

Chatterton. You bastard !

Walpole. Tush ! that dart has spent its force.

She hugged the priestly poet and repulsed

The vagrant passion of the beggar-boy.

That brought a sigh ; could you not spill a tear ?

Chatterton. I'll not believe your spite.

Walpole. You shall have proof.

You flared six candles ; I will flash a score

To show that Horace—Hervey, if you please,—

Unhorsed old Rowley in the lists of iove,

And wears the lady's favour.

Chatterton. You married her ?

Walpole. [*With mocking laughter.*]

I could not so corrupt my Hervey blood.

You may espouse her in a year or two ;

For matrons can not be so nice as maids.

And she looks kindly on you—pities you.

Chatterton. Spout not of pity : we are in the lists ;
No quarter given and no quarter asked.

Walpole. 'Twould melt Tintagel's rock to hear her
plead

For me to aid you, with her naked arms
Entrailing me like sprays of rambling rose ;
Her eyes half-closed and swimming in their light ;
Her redolent tresses willowing her breast—
But you turn white and tremble.

Chatterton. Spare me not,
Lest in my soul one spark of mercy glow.

Walpole. In faith, her lips undo their suasion quite ;
For with their moistening pressure they remove
From memory's page the pledge their music won :
Else had I called before.

Chatterton. Have you said all ?

Walpole. Nay, I could clasp the fanciful a week
And never weary, were she o'er the seas ;
But dwelling here in London at my house,
I can embrace the real ; so take my leave.

[*Chatterton closes the door hurriedly, locks it, puts the
key in his pocket, and, taking off his coat, throws it
upon the floor, while Walpole looks at him in alarm.*]

What do you purpose ?

Chatterton. Not to boggle, sir ;
Now weapons and not words.

Walpole. Give me that key !

Chatterton. [Going to the table and wrenching out the dagger.]

'Tis fitting that the cross should bear you down :

If what you say is true, you fouled an angel ;

If it is false, you vilely slander one.

For either, it is death.

Walpole.

Beware your life ;

If you rush on me I will run you through !

Chatterton. Miss not my heart the width of that keen blade,

Or you are lost past praying.—Are you ready ?

[Loud knocking on the door.

Walpole. Break down the door ! help ! murder, murder, help !

[*Chatterton runs toward Walpole who slips past him. The door is burst open, the lock falling with a crash, and Burgum, Mrs. Angell, and Bertha Burgum rush between them.*

Burgum. Hold !

Mrs. Angell. Mr. Chatterton !

Bertha. For my sake, hold !

Burgum. What does this mean ?

Walpole.

He strove to murder me.

Chatterton. In Clifton once they paid for killing fox, Hedgehog, or polecat ; and you are all three.

Bertha. Give up the dagger.

Chatterton. Nay, it is the cross,
Which rests in peace-time on the altar here.

[*Goes to the table and fixes the dagger in it.*

Walpole. He is stark mad.

Chatterton. I am unweaponed now.

Bertha. How did this quarrel rise?

Walpole. I told him all.

Bertha. You should have kept part secret.

Chatterton. [*Ironically.*] Lack-a-day!

Walpole. Nor did I gloss the nature of my suit,
Which, to untempted Impotence or Age,
Is e'er a crime past clergy; that I came,
Upon your hint, to minister to his muse,
As kind of penance for my amorous course.
At which, with jealous rage, he locked the door,
And would have slain me had you not appeared.

Bertha. 'Tis not astounding that it angered him.

[*Then to Chatterton.*]

Do not endeavour to avenge the wrong:

I have forgiven him.

Burgum. Avenge what wrong?

Walpole. I will inform you as we ride toward
home.

Chatterton. [*To Bertha*]. Came he from you?

Bertha. He came at my request
Made in rash moment, for I pitied you.

Chatterton. His very words! Condone my rashness,
lady :

I am an errant of the chivalrous past,
A knight in pantaloons—with broken lance.

[*Then turning to Burgum.*]

Proceed to business and have done with else :
What loadstone have I here?

Burgum. You brazen rogue,
The Heralds' College disallows my Arms :
The Pedigree is stuff! What say you, boy?

Bertha. Wait till to-morrow, father.

Burgum. Not a breath.

Walpole. He is so youthful, we must not be harsh.

Chatterton. [*Turning to Walpole.*]

Open your jaws except to curse me, sir,
And I will speed you to that cirque where bawds
Are lapped in warring blasts.

Burgum. Your answer now.

Chatterton. E'en in this fevered wilderment of mind,
The strong excuse that rises eloquent
Shall be o'erruled : I plead for clemency.

Burgum. Will that restore to me my Norman
sires?

Chatterton. Born on this merry Isle, you have enough
With English birth and birthright.

Burgum. I'll have revenge !

Chatterton. Revenge is yours beyond your direst wish,
For I am suffering more than you can feel ;
But if you deem that punishment too slight,
There is a poniard, and my soul's unarmed.

Burgum. I will proclaim your perfidy abroad,
That you may straggle, like a branded Cain,
Without a friend on earth.

Chatterton. I have a friend
Who would do more for me than for himself ;
Whose gentle nature, like St. Andrew's Spring,
Pours forth a never-failing flood of love,
To nourish flowers or bathe the dusty streets ;
Murmuring at times, but ever sweet and low.
He stands like Tor Hill on the plain of Wells ;
Go move him if you can.

Burgum. Who is he, pray ?

Chatterton. His name is Thomas Phillips.

Burgum. [*Chuckling brutally.*] He is dead.

Chatterton. That lie makes you my debtor !

Burgum. It is the truth :
George Catcott wrote me that Tom Phillips died
From cold he caught in London.

Chatterton.

O my God!—

You are too cruel had I killed your son.
If you say this to crush my spirit down,
See, I am humbled, all my pride is gone.
Tell me he lives.

Bertha.

Alas! your friend is dead.

Chatterton. Then God has been dethroned!—Leave
me alone :

My grief is kingly and must not be seen.

[*Chatterton stands like a statue, the tears rolling down
his cheeks, till the others have gone down the stairs;
then he goes to the door, closes it, and sinks sobbing
upon his knees, his hands clinging to the frame.*]

O Phillips, Phillips!—Dear Tom Phillips dead!

And Bertha Burgum Walpole's paramour!

Not all earth's wealth could keep me on it now:

Tell father I am coming, dearest friend.

[*Rises and goes toward the table but stops.*]

No dagger: I will not profane the cross.

Song Man. [*From the street.*]

Songs! Songs! Songs! Beautiful songs!

Love songs, new songs, old songs—all for a penny!

Chatterton. The price is up, and poets now can
nibble

At hopes and biscuit in Tom's Coffee House.

That minds me of a task yet unperformed.

[*Throws his coat upon the bed and goes to the deal box.*]

I must be swift and steady in the work
Of murdering my babes.

[*Opens the box, selects a manuscript, and reads.*]

‘A Song to Ælla.’

That will repay the City for my burial :

I shall owe London nothing. [*Puts it aside.*]

Recall her fall !

[*Tears up the manuscripts.*]

Song Man. [*More faintly from the street.*]

Songs ! Songs ! Songs ! Beautiful songs !

Love songs, new songs, old songs—all for a penny !

Chatterton. [*Rising.*]

Think not, my children, that this moves me not

Because my eyes are dry : the scalding tears

Are dropping on my heart ; and we shall meet

Above the fateful glimmer of the stars.—

I’ll comb my hair : my exit must be seemly.

[*Takes up a candle and a comb and goes to the mirror.*]

If it be sooth that hair grows in the grave,

What famous locks I’ll have. [*Combs out his auburn*

hair and then pauses.] This mirror gleams

A crystal lake in which my wraith appears,

With Orkney sea-weed spread upon its head,

Foreshadowing my doom. I shall not live
To hold a candle nightly to the glass
And watch my face grow old : to see the lines
Deepen to ditches round the eyes and mouth
When Time besieges Beauty ; to make that fight,
Which must be lost, against the first gray hairs—
Plucking them out lest wingèd Love espy
The ghostly vanguard of advancing years.
Nor last, with taper held in palsied clutch,
To view the muddy orbs, the lips caved in,
The visage rutted, as if a thousand cares,
After long rains, had driven their heavy wains,
With iron-bound wheels, across the features.—No !
The spirit of my youth shall never peer
Through Age's hideous mask. [*Leaves the mirror.*]

You fly too high

For sorrow ; stoop, my Fancy, lest your pitch
Impugn my grief and lure me into living.
I'll singe your wings ! [*Flashes the light about, stops
suddenly, and laughs.*]

Theatric on the brink !

Most like, in maddening moonlight, Death and I
Will sit upon my grave and forge antiques.
We'll split the point of his insatiate dart,
And write in poets' blood, on their white skulls,

The songs they left unsung. 'Twill be revenge
 To make of hungry Death a harmless bard,
 With nothing but a pen to fill his maw.
 Death being dartless, fools will multiply :
 Each foot of ground will have its occupant,
 And then they'll stand upon each other's heads
 Until the topmost clamber into heaven.—
 Lend me a hand, dear Phillips ; pull me up !
 [*Extends his hand heavenward, and then, bursting into
 tears, brings it down across his eyes.*]
 There'll be a horrid screaming in the morning.
 The Coroner and jurymen will find :
 ' Drank opium in water, Friday night,
 The twenty-fourth of August, seventeen seventy,
 At Brooke Street, Holborn, number thirty-nine,
 T. Chatterton, about eighteen—unknown.'
 The shell will be of rough boards painted black—
 The heart, perchance, of some tall singing pine
 Besmirched by hands like those that felled the tree ;
 And Curiosity, not Love, will look
 The last time on my face. One ghoul may say,
 As I am borne past Shoe Lane Workhouse wall,
 ' The boy was handsome ; pity he was starved ;
 And yet, well-fed, he would have galled our hands.
 We'll take what London pays us for this job,

And at the Three Crowns drink the youngster's health
In tankards of old ale.—Quick step, my lads ! '
If they consign me to the common pit,
And when my bones disjoint, my skeleton
Should seek a missing foot or this dear hand,
How those old skulls will grin ! What's that to me ?
No wizard word can conjure up from hell
A fiend more dread than one dissembling friend
Exulting in my writhe. Enough of both ;
I'll see how Mors looks bottled.

*[Goes to the bed, takes a phial from his coat, and comes
down holding the poison before his eyes.]*

Were Fancy free

To finger o'er this simple cadence, death,
She'd find rich harmonies in senseless things,
And write a fugue that would not end till doomsday.
Instead of that, I'll mull some Bristol milk,
The brew she uses when she weans her bards
From her cold breast—the pap she fed to Savage.

*[Goes to the washstand, pours water into a glass, and
takes the glass to the table.]*

What shape will issue ? Come, Beelzebub !

[Uncorks the phial and looks round.]

His horns stick fast, or may be that he fears
To fright me from my purpose.—Well, no matter.

[Pours the opium into the water.]

The bubbles rise : quick, quick ! a soul is drowning.

[Stirs the poison with a quill.]

I'll push it back as I immerse a fly

To shield it from chill weather. *[Knocking on the door.]*

Who is that ?

It may be Bertha—she returned before—

And I may see her, save her, ere I die !

[Goes to the door, opens it, and starts back as Mrs. Angell enters with a basket on her arm.]

Mrs. Angell. Mr. Francisco brought this for you, sir.

Chatterton. *[Taking the basket and looking into it.]*

Tarts, apple-fritters, jelly and champagne.—

I have no relish for these dainties, madam :

Give them to little Bertha, and tell the child

To pray for me to-night.

Mrs. Angell. You must eat, sir.

Chatterton. Well, leave them by the table on the floor.

Mrs. Angell. The lady, ere she left, bade me supply Your wants, and she—

Chatterton. Would pay with Walpole's gold !

[Picks up Walpole's purse and hurls it upon the floor.]

Enter BERTHA BURGUM unseen.

Mrs. Angell. She meant not to distress you. Take some wine.

Chatterton. [*Raising the glass of poison.*]

In bitter water, a more fitting draught

For Bedouin lost upon the desert sands,

I drink the damsel's health !

[*Drinks.*

Bertha.

Drink now to me.

Chatterton. [*Turning and seeing her.*]

The toast was to you, lady.

Bertha.

You are ill !

Chatterton. I pant for pleasure in a wish fulfilled.

Bertha. Dear Mrs. Angell, we must be alone :

There is a secret that I would impart.

Mrs. Angell. I hope that it is cheering ; for the boy
Has borne enough.

Bertha.

I hope so, too.

Mrs. Angell.

Good-night.

[*Exit Mrs. Angell as he puts the glass on the washstand.*

Bertha. Please give me some beginning to my tale :

'Tis harder to own folly than offence.

Chatterton. Speak freely, lady, for I know the worst ;
And, needing mercy, I am merciful.

Bertha. One thing you can not know.

Chatterton.

Alas ! I do,

And love you madly still.

Bertha. [*In a whisper.*] I came in time.—
How could I be so foolish !

Chatterton. No good is tardy :
Oh, leave him, lady, leave a life of shame ;
Where love is lacking, dalliance is foul.

Bertha. I know not what you mean !

Chatterton. He says you are—
I must pronounce it—are his paramour.

Bertha. He tells a groundless lie !

Chatterton. [*With a wild cry.*] Thank God ! thank
God !

Bertha. He made proposals that were met with
scorn ;
Professed repentance ; begged me not to tell
My father, or to quit the house at once,
Lest it would scandal him ; asked what good deed
Lay in his might to prove reform sincere ;
And rashly then I pointed to your claim.
I have his letters to attest the truth ;
For I refused to encounter him alone.

Chatterton. Oh, I could make him tread with naked
feet
On plates of red-hot iron, marking each step
With strips of burning flesh !

Bertha. You are o'erwrought.

Chatterton. My soul for one short hour!—But he
shall live

Chained to my corpse for aye !

Bertha.

Be calm and listen.

I took a separate hack, making excuse
That he must speak to father on a theme
I could not hear discussed ; and then returned,
Against all custom, form, and girlish pride,
To say that I—that I had waked to love.

Chatterton. O Mary Redcliffe, did you know of this,
And let me perish ?

Bertha. [*Sinking upon a chair.*] You will despise
me now.

Chatterton. [*Kneeling beside her and taking her hands.*]
Despise you, Bertha ? O my love ! my love !
No saint is worshipped as I worship you ;
And I am half a spirit—half removed
From fleshly passion now. [*Goes to the table and takes
from the drawer a bunch of faded flowers.*]

See, I have kept
The lilacs that once bloomed upon your breast ;
They withered though I watered them with tears.

Bertha. [*Rising.*] Forgive me, Tom.

Chatterton. [*Taking her in his arms.*] You are my
own at last !

The blossom of my life is now full-blown,
And its leaves are rustling in the autumn wind.

Bertha. I was so young that I felt very old,
And you seemed but a child.

Chatterton. The past is past ;
The present makes amend.

Bertha. The future, too ;
For I have learned that Reverend Dr. Fry,
The head of St. John's College, Oxford, read
Your Rowley poems, and is coming down
To greet the truest poet of the age.

Chatterton. To die when Fame's bronze gates are
opening wide,
And Love is walking with me hand in hand !
'Tis well : I am a creature born of fire,
And could not live 'mong mortals.

Bertha. You are fagged,
And speak so strangely.

Chatterton. Happiness is strange ;
And you remember I was ever odd :
They dubbed me 'The Mad Genius' in our town.

Bertha. Your vision has been clouded by the storm ;
All will be sunlight after one long sleep.

Chatterton. If I should die—

Bertha. Oh, no !

Chatterton. But if I should,
For frost oft kills the firstlings in the spring,
Console my mother and my sister, love ;
And go to Mary Redcliffe, where my ghost
Will walk the pillared aisles on moonlit nights.—
And now no more of dying or of death :
This is our wedding-night.

Bertha. Our wedding-night?

Chatterton. We'll christen it 'The Marriage of Two
Souls.'

[*He passes his hand over his brow ; for the voices of a
choir are heard singing as they sang in the muniment
room, but more faintly ; for they are sounding in his
mind.*]

But first I must be shriven from all sin.
Kneel with me at this altar, love, and say,
'Saint Mary Redcliffe, pardon Chatterton ;
For my sake, pardon him.' Repeat it, dear.

Bertha. [*Kneeling beside him.*]

'Saint Mary Redcliffe, pardon Chatterton ;
For my sake, pardon him.'

Chatterton. [*As they rise.*] That is enough ;
For, clearer than those voices, come the words,
'Forgive him, for he knew not what he did.'

Bertha. What voices, Tom ?

Mary Redcliffe.

[ACT V.]

Chatterton. [*Dreamingly.*] Do you not hear them?

Bertha.

No.

Chatterton. My father sang in the Cathedral choir.

[*Nearly swooning, he grasps the table for support.*]

Open the window, dear, the air is close !

[*Then as she goes to the window and opens it.*]

I am coming, Mary Redcliffe ; give me time

To bid my earthly love farewell.

Bertha. [*Returning anxiously to him.*] O Tom !

Chatterton. 'Tis nothing but sheer weariness—no more :

You know how hard on me the day has been.

Bertha. Then I must go.

Chatterton.

Yes, dearest, it is wise :

Love can not beat off Slumber with his wings.

[*A distant clock begins to strike the hour.*]

Bertha. When shall I come again ?

Chatterton.

I leave here soon.

Meet me, dear Bertha, in the muniment room—

My Uncle Richard will give you the key—

Next Friday night upon the stroke of ten :

The hour is tolling now.

Bertha.

I'll meet you there.

Chatterton. But one more kiss, my love ! [*Strains her to his breast and kisses her.*] And fare-you-well.

Bertha. [Going to the doorway and turning.]
Good-night, dear Tom.

Chatterton. [With forced cheerfulness.]

You see how strong I am !

[As *Bertha* descends the stairs, *Chatterton* steals to the landing and leans against the door-frame.

Drunken Woman. [From the street, singing in maudlin tones with occasional bursts of laughter.]

I put my hand into a bush,
I pricked my finger to the bone,
I saw a ship sailing along,
I thought the sweetest flowers to find.

Chatterton. [Rushing out on the landing and calling wildly as the door below closes with a bang.]

Bertha ! Bertha ! Bertha !—Die here alone,
You selfish fool, and spare her all you can.

[Re-enters the room.]

The gall of cuttle-fish and aloe wood,
Red styrax and red roses have been burned—
The room is full of blood, with zigzag lightning
Flashing before my eyes ! I'll kneel and pray.

[As he kneels before the table, the sounds of a horn, of wheels, and of *St. Werburgh's* song are heard as they were heard before, and he rises delirious.]

The coach !—

The coach is coming at a spanking pace !

Do not weep, mother ; it is for the best :

You and fond sister shall wear silks and gems,

And ride to service in a chaise-and-four.

Fear not for me ; my courage will not fail :

Westminster Abbey shall enclose my bones.

[*The sounds of the coach cease.*]

I must not tarry, for the coach is here.

I've taken Bristol ; now for London Town !

[*Goes to the bed and sits down upon it as if it were the basket of a coach.*]

Good-bye, dear mother, sister, Phillips, too ;

May Mary Redcliffe bless you—every one.

[*His head sinks slowly back upon the pillow, the singing grows fainter and fainter, and the coach wheels roll away. Then all sounds cease as the hand holding the faded lilacs falls from his breast over the side of the bed ; and he lies, as if asleep in the muniment room, dead in the moonlight.*]

Watchman. [*From the street.*] Past ten o'clock and all's well ! Past ten o'clock and all's well ! Past ten o'clock and all's well !

Curtain.

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